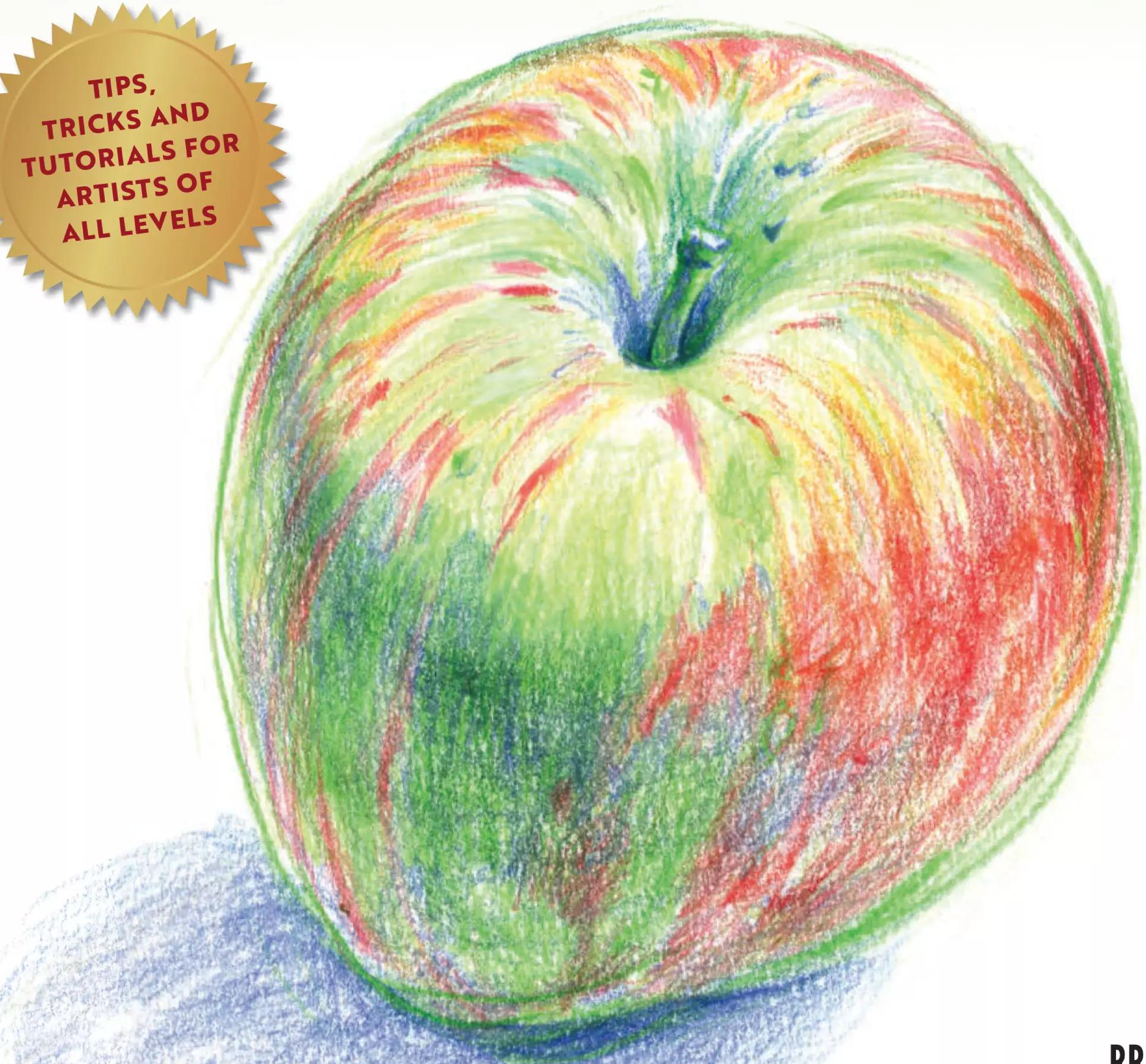
Artists
&ILLUSTRATORS
HOW-TO GUIDES
VOLUME
6

DRAWING
The natural world

TIPS, TRICKS AND TUTORIALS FOR ARTISTS OF ALL LEVELS



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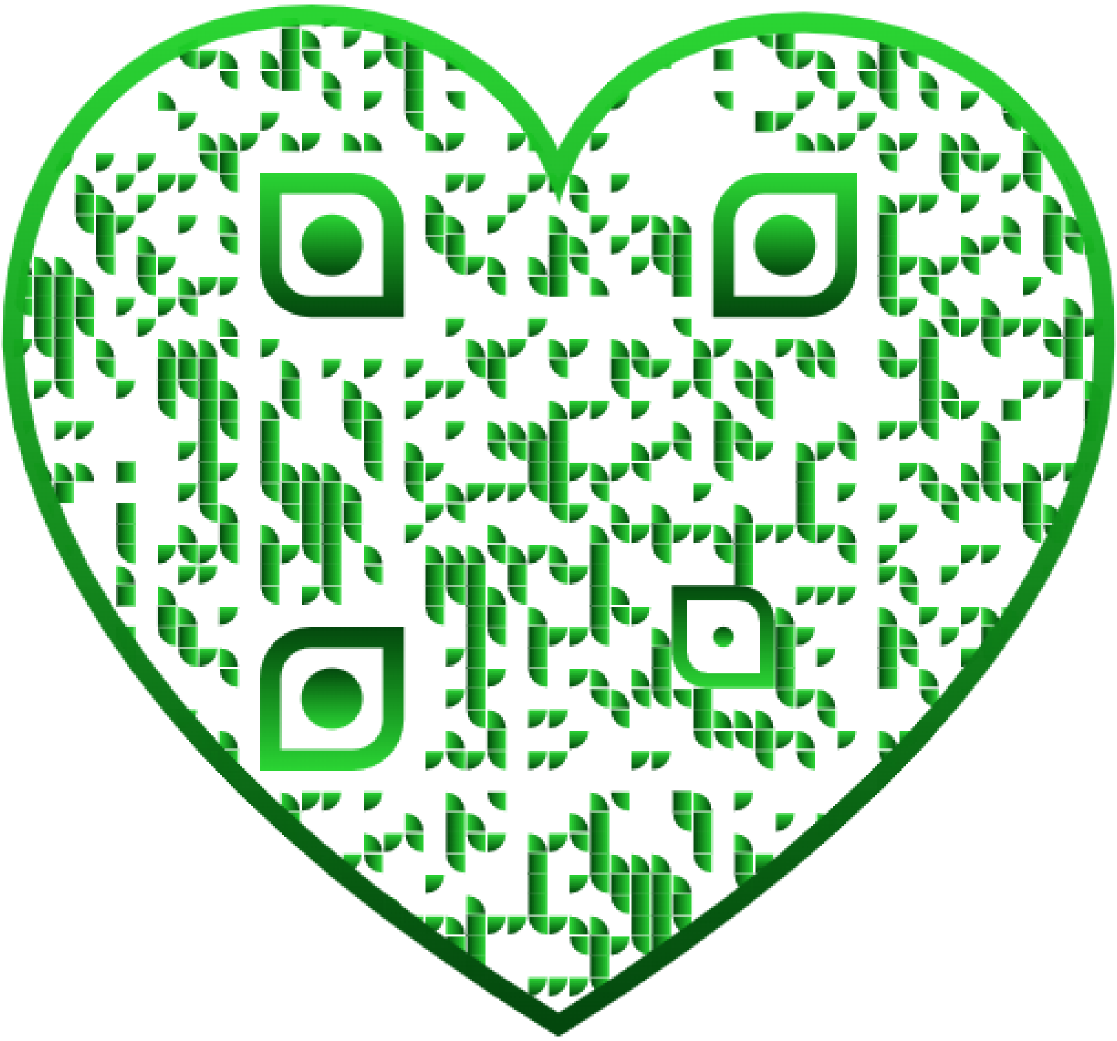


Welcome to your sixth *free* How-To guide, this time on drawing the natural world in mixed media!

Whether you're an inspired beginner or a seasoned artist, this comprehensive guide offers fresh inspiration. From Tim Pond, an acclaimed educator, author and illustrator with a passion for watercolour, landscape and wildlife drawing, this book takes the form of a series of studies comprising of art, colour and tone, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space. These concepts introduce the essential techniques and demonstrate how they can be used in drawing the natural world through practical projects. There's also background information about the featured animals and vegetation to broaden the reader's awareness of and connection with the natural world.

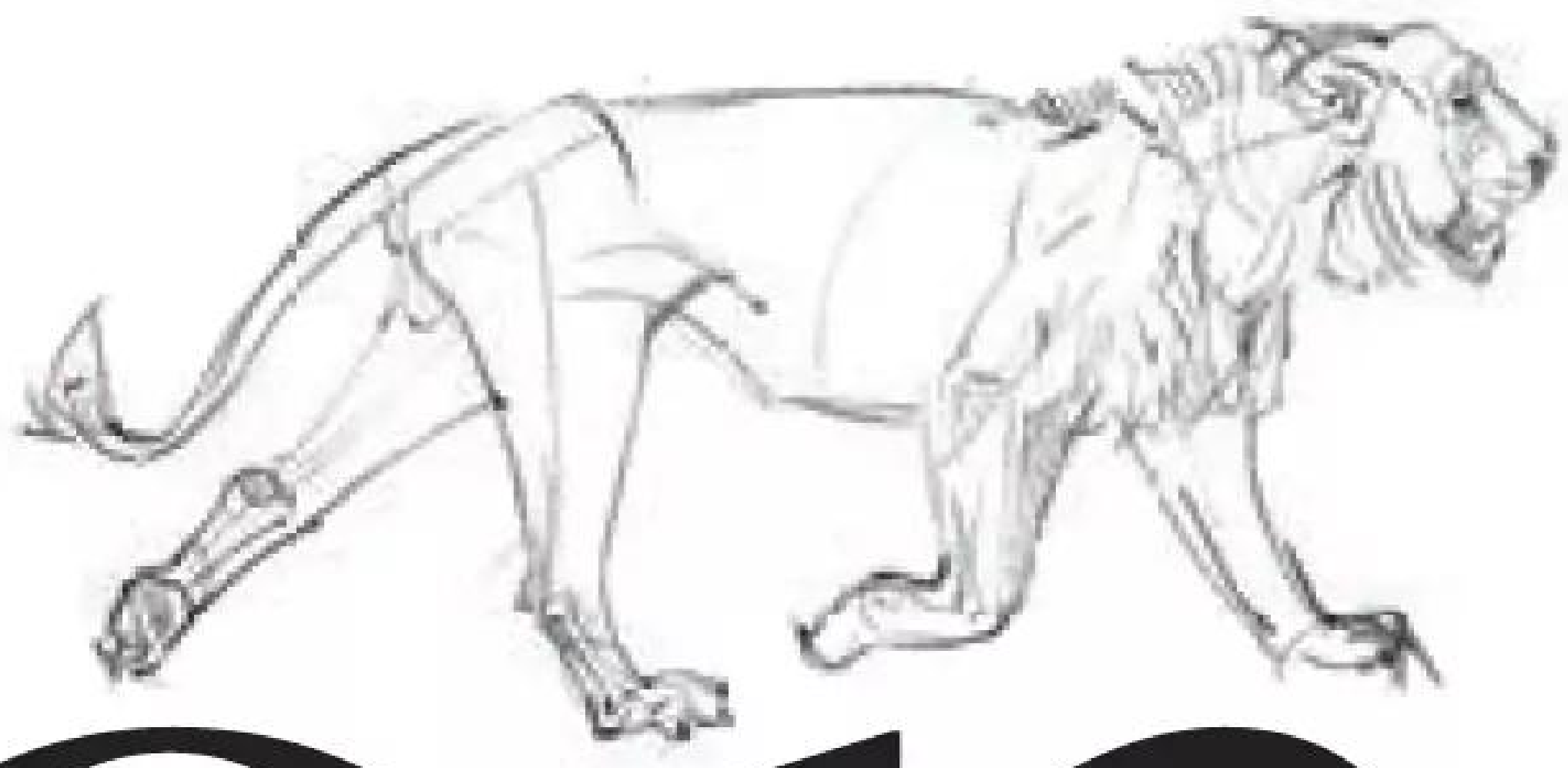
Pond's focus on fundamental concepts such as proportion, contour, gesture, weight and structure opens the door to seeing the natural world with eyes anew. It also adds a simplicity of explanation which adds to the appeal of the book.

Limiting each section to just a single spread leaves no room for waffling and you'll proceed at pace. Discover joy in drawing while exploring colour, detail, pattern and texture.

Step-by-step demonstrations and friendly expert advice will boost your confidence and grow your skills. Discover your own relationship with nature and dive into creativity and self-expression today with every line you draw.

Niki Browes Editor

Conten



6 **INTRODUCTION**
Develop your own approach and find out what makes a good drawing

8 **EXPLORE THE NATURAL WORLD THROUGH DRAWING**
Find your own style and medium

10 **LINE ESSENTIALS**
Different mark-making techniques

12 **BONES**
Understanding bone structure for your drawing

14 **POSTURE AND GAIT**
Learn about the limbs

16 **SHAPE ESSENTIALS**
How capturing shape is key to expressing the personality of any subject

18 **DRAWING GIANT ANIMALS**
Learn about scale plus two step-by-steps on drawing the blue whale and moa skeletons

20 **ANIMAL PORTRAITS**
Capture likeness and personality, and a study sheet on the fennec fox

24 **TONE ESSENTIALS**
Understanding the lightness and darkness of a colour

26 **LIGHT AND SHADOW**
How to capture it on the page

ts

28 FORM ESSENTIALS
How to convey form, giving it mass and weight

30 MODELLING WITH LINE
Create the appearance of three dimensions, plus a step-by-step on drawing a cactus

32 COLOUR WITH PENCILS
Hatching, layering and scumbling, plus a step-by-step guide to drawing an apple

34 COLOUR WITH WATERCOLOURS
Drawing with brushes, plus two step-by-step guides on painting a fish

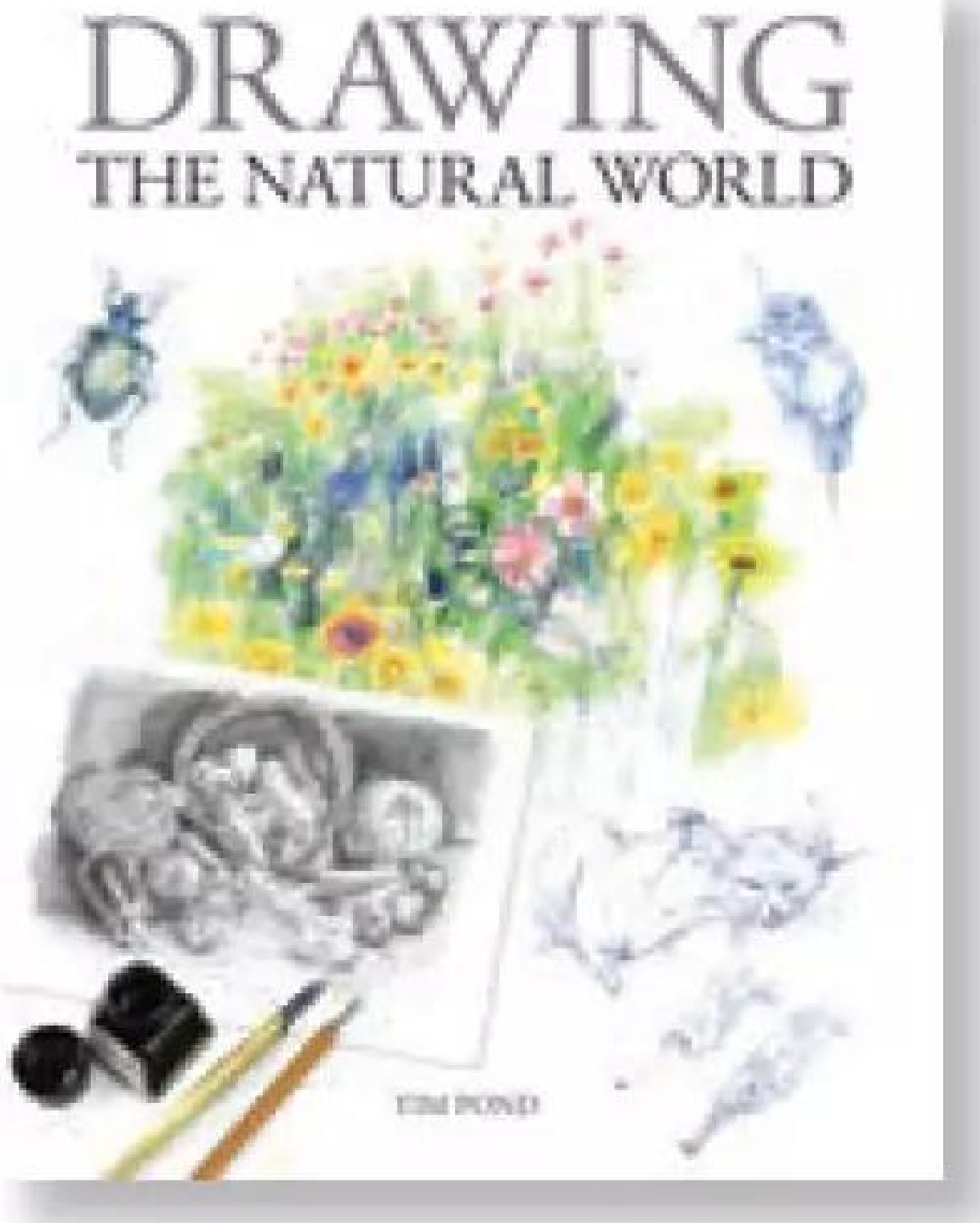
36 ATMOSPHERIC PERSPECTIVE
Observing tonal values in colour and black and white

38 LOOKING THROUGH
Create depth and scale

40 PATTERN AND TEXTURE ESSENTIALS
Explore experimental and individual ways to imply both pattern and texture

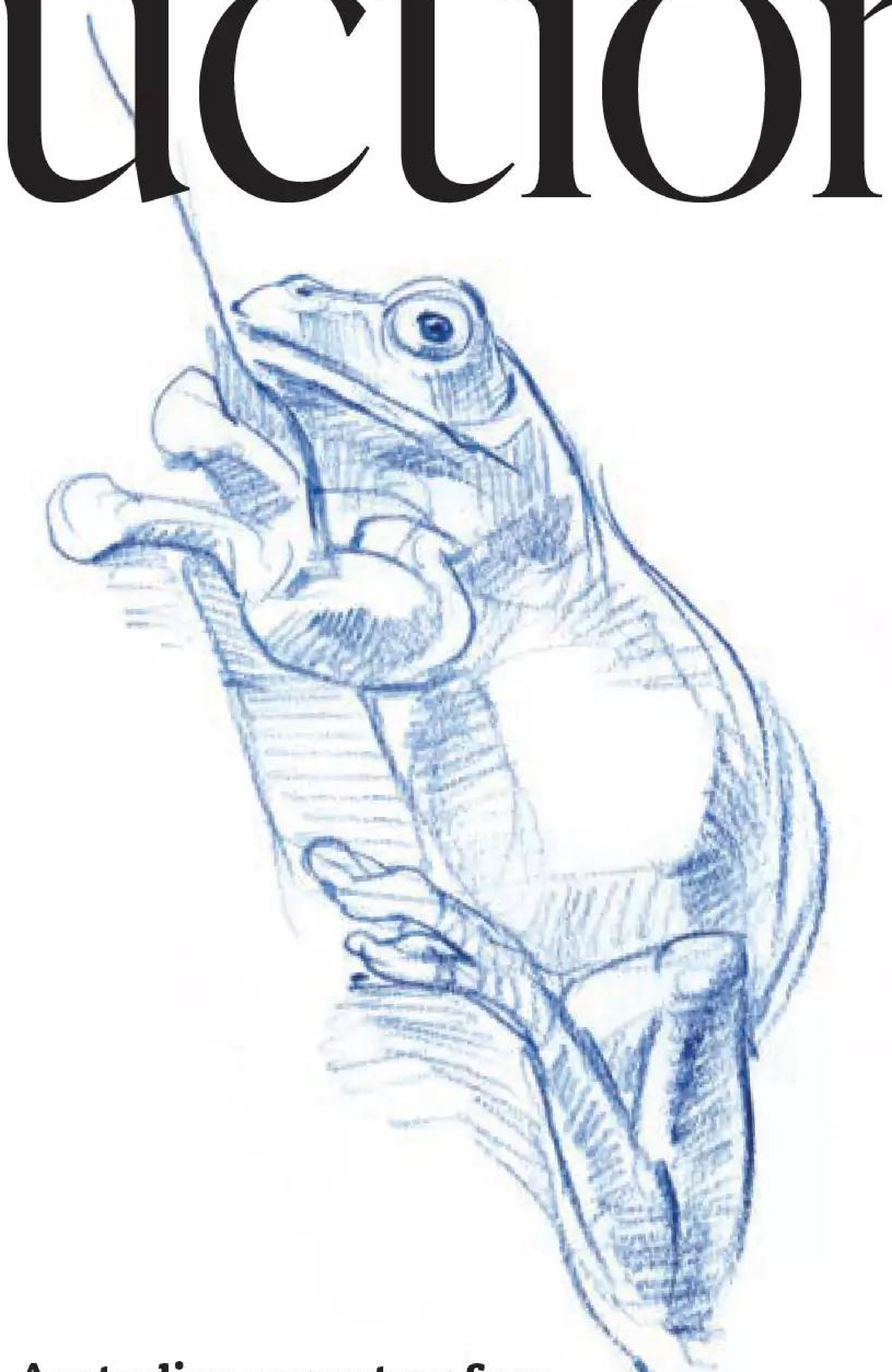
42 COMPOSITION ESSENTIALS
Portrait, landscape or square?

44 RULE OF THIRDS
How to organise pictorial elements, plus a step-by-step on drawing the kitchen garden at Kew Gardens



Drawing the Natural World by Tim Pond, GMC Publications, RRP £14.99, available online and from all good bookshops

Introduction



Australian green tree frog (Ranoidea caerulea)
A long pelvis creates the triangular sacral hump on the back of a frog to aid jumping. Most arboreal species are tiny because they rely on slender branches to hold their weight. However, the plump green tree frog can grow up to 4½in (11.5cm) in length.

Nature and drawing are subjects I have loved since before I could talk and in this book, I share my passion for both and explore what connects them. Using a host of drawing ideas and techniques suitable for beginners and experienced artists, my aim is to help you look at the natural world with fresh eyes and encourage you to have fun drawing it. You will find a complete course on drawing that is designed to help you get outdoors with a sketchbook and make drawing a part of your life.

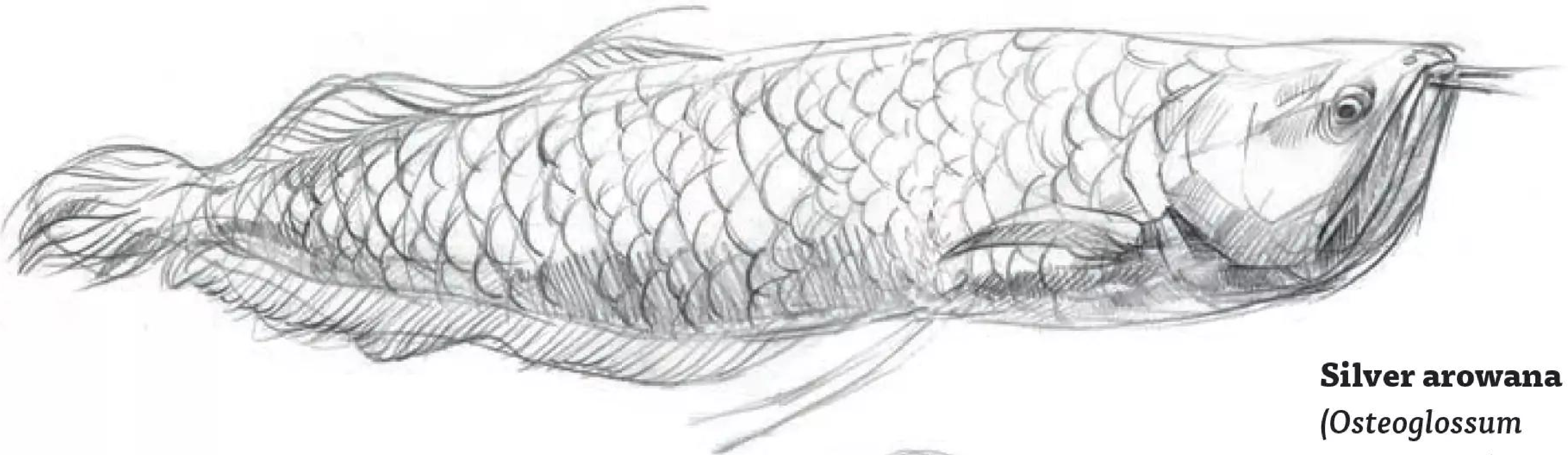
Drawing is a crucial component of a creative person's development and underpins all the visual art disciplines. The sections in this book are designed to equip you with an armoury of skills. Each one aims to instil the importance of observing, analysing and drawing. We look at the familiar in new and unfamiliar ways to bring a fresh pair of eyes to accessible subjects. Each project spotlights different aspects of the elements in art, whether line, shape, space, form and tone, texture and pattern, colour or composition. Step-by-step instructions break the process down for anyone to easily follow.

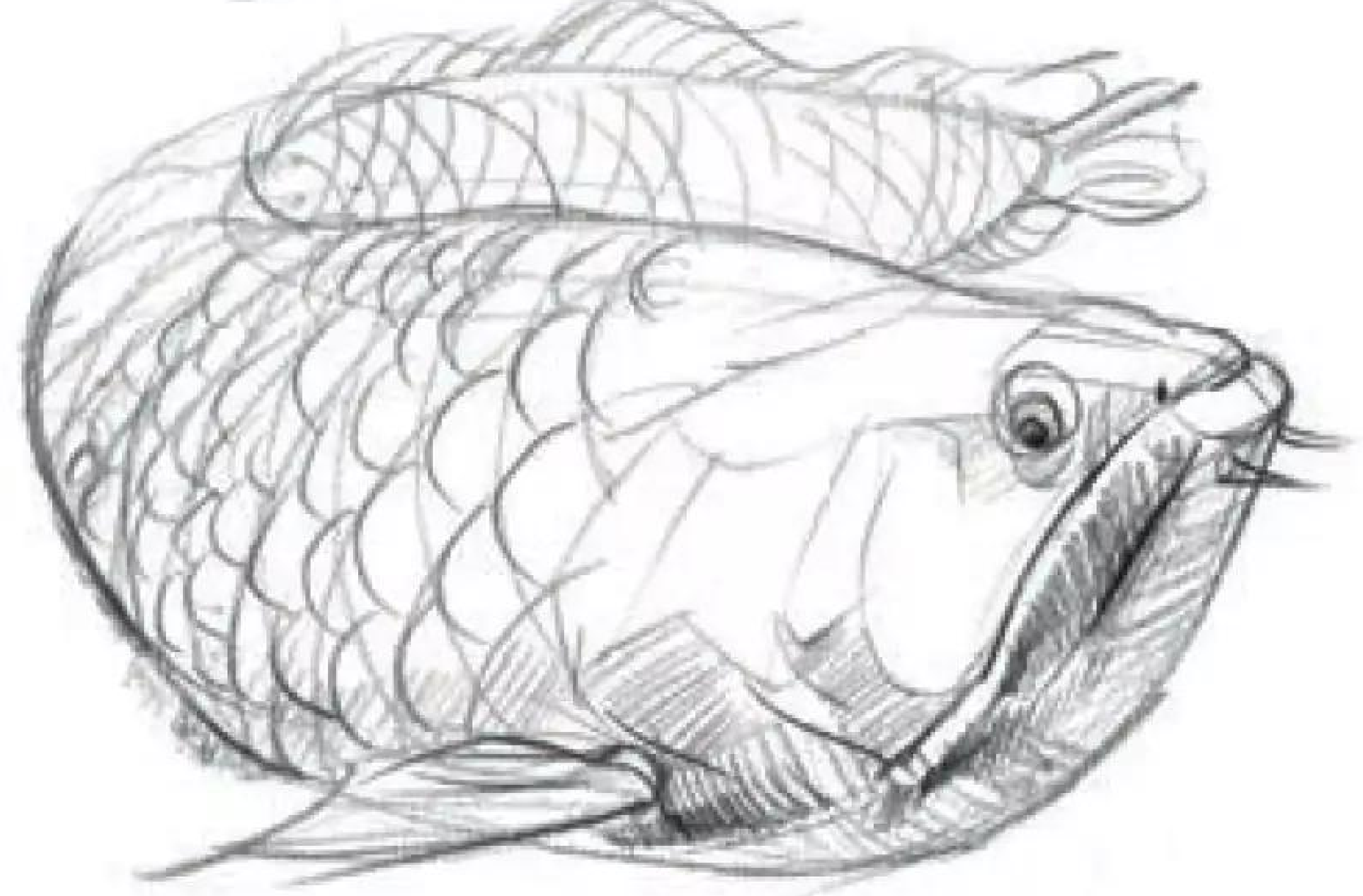
However, this guide is not just about the finished result: it also looks at the dynamic relationship between the viewer and the natural subject. It will increase your awareness of the world around you as you make your observations, which stimulates creative thinking and the ability to make connections. The simple act of observing and translating what we see onto paper can bring us closer to the natural world and engender a greater sympathy for the subject. Moreover, drawing can reveal not only the subject but also the creator's personality. People who look at your drawings will be able to connect with your thoughts and feelings.

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN APPROACH

My own approach to drawing is to first concentrate on the fundamental concepts, such as proportion, contour, gesture, weight and structure. Then, I move on to the surface to explore colour, detail, pattern and texture. I also focus on feeling and expression to make my sketches of animals and plants come alive. My drawings emphasise what I call 'natural realism,' primarily made in front of a live model, whether animal or plant.

Nevertheless, instead of imposing 'my way' of sketching, I want you to use the projects as a starting point. Drawing is as individual as handwriting, and everyone following these tutorials will have a unique result. Pick and choose projects that focus on what you wish to achieve,





> *'If I have made any valuable discoveries, it has been owing more to patient observation than any other reason.'*
>
> **Isaac Newton**

Silver arowana *(Osteoglossum bicirrhosum)* Arowanas are a group of ancient freshwater bony fish, also known as 'bony tongues,' as they have a bone on the floor of the mouth.

from representational accuracy to dynamic expressionism. You will find a solid background in formal concepts and sketching techniques, but I encourage you to be playful and experiment with them. I see the artist as the sternest critic of their own work, but with the ability to learn from their mistakes and adapt. I want you to find joy in the 'Hey, that's not bad!' feeling on finishing a sketch.

Don't worry if your drawings look nothing like the examples, as long as you spend time trying. The more effort you put in, the more you will get out of drawing. Don't be afraid of making mistakes. Heads typically will be too large at the beginning of your drawing journey, and this is something that all of us need to check on at all stages of proficiency. I have included a wide variety of materials and techniques to cater to various tastes. Mix and match with what you have without going out and buying new materials.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD DRAWING?

Drawing refers to the act of creating marks on a surface, often a pictorial representation of an object or place. It can also depict something that does not exist, such as an abstract expression. Representational drawing is, at its heart, a culmination of a set of abstract marks that, when brought together, create the impression of a subject. Everyone can draw and while many will measure an artist's skill based on the technical accuracy of the depiction of the subject, there are other qualities to consider. Drawings that lack photographic accuracy may stand out and be an artistic success for many other reasons, such as their sense of movement, an economy of marks, or their weight or spatial or expressive qualities.

Be enthusiastic about the subjects you decide to draw. When the subject is close to the artist's heart – for example, if the artist loves birds – there can be a degree of integrity in the work. Emphasis on what makes a drawing appealing changes over time, but we can draw valuable lessons from art history. Rembrandt, one of the greatest draughtsmen, was fascinated with observing and journalling his daily life between grand oil portrait commissions. Nothing was too simple, not even a dog in the street. My favourite drawings tend to be full of life, where the artist's marks are clearly visible, regardless of the period.

Drawing the natural world is a way of learning about its structures and seeing it with greater clarity, a way to feel more connected and bound to it. I want drawing to be a process that brings you closer to nature through patient observation and calmness. Drawing is a fantastic activity for feeling part of the natural world and discovering. So let's learn to draw together! ◻

Explore the natural world through drawing

Through drawing the natural world, I want you to discover connections between the evolution of species and symbiotic relationships. All the plants and animals have evolved together, creating a web of life of incredible complexity and breathtaking diversity. Engaging with the varieties of life that inhabit the earth bring delight. Just as an author writes about what they know, I encourage you to learn about the raw materials of nature, and the best way to do this is to use your senses.

IMMERSIVE DISCOVERIES

As pictures are seen with the eyes, it is easy to forget that being in a location or observing an object is an accumulated experience of all five senses. We do not simply observe with our eyes. We also smell with our noses, listen with our ears, taste with our tongue and touch with our skin. All five senses play an important role in making sense of an animal, plant, rock or place. Before you begin any study, take time to soak up the atmosphere or touch the object you are about to sketch. Is it a rough pine cone or a smooth pebble? Feel the weight of a heavy, warty cooking apple, touch the tip of your finger on the sharp thorn of a rose or taste the sour flavour of a lemon.

I strongly suggest you immerse yourself in nature and go wandering with your sketchbook. Go into the middle of an autumnal wood, for example, with golden leaves tumbling around you, then close your eyes, breathe deeply and focus on the smells of the damp moss, the wet tree trunks and even the earth itself. Concentrate on your individual senses, such as sound and listen to the wind rustling the leaves and the birds twittering. Pick a blackberry from a bush and taste its dark plummy flavour. Touch the rough texture of bark or the soft spring of a bed of moss.

Experiential learning

The process whereby you 'learn by doing' and reflect on the experience is referred to as experiential learning. Learning to draw is a highly personal journey similar to learning to ride a bicycle, falling off and then modifying your actions so you don't fall off again. Drawing starts with a hands-on concrete experience, reflection and the formation of abstract concepts, and active experimentation of those concepts. This guide provides a foundation of drawing skills that will give you the confidence to go forward by yourself, like taking the stabilisers off a bicycle. Nevertheless, just like learning a musical instrument or learning to walk, the first steps of drawing are also the hardest.

As with any discipline, practising drawing will improve coordination between your eye, muscle movement and hand. It is not years of practice that improves skill but the amount of pencil miles one puts in. For this reason, I suggest you have fun with activities that can be carried out at museums, wildlife parks and botanical gardens, whether as an individual or part of a group activity. In this way, you will gain drawing experience directly from nature, whether plant or animal, that will help you get to know it more intimately.

Extended thinking

Drawing can also allow us to make associations we otherwise might not have thought of in a non-linear way. It is a fantastic tool that can be applied to any career, perhaps explaining how to put something together, planning a bathroom or creating a map. Charles Darwin (1809–1882) even doodled an evolutionary tree of life to develop his theory of natural selection and Thomas Edison (1847–1931) filled his journals with sketches that led the way to the invention of the light bulb. Virtually all children draw as a tool for learning, but far too often this is replaced for many by the written word as we grow up. Practical considerations aside, drawing can be a wonderful tool for self-expression and be practised as a pleasurable and meditative activity.

MODES OF DRAWING

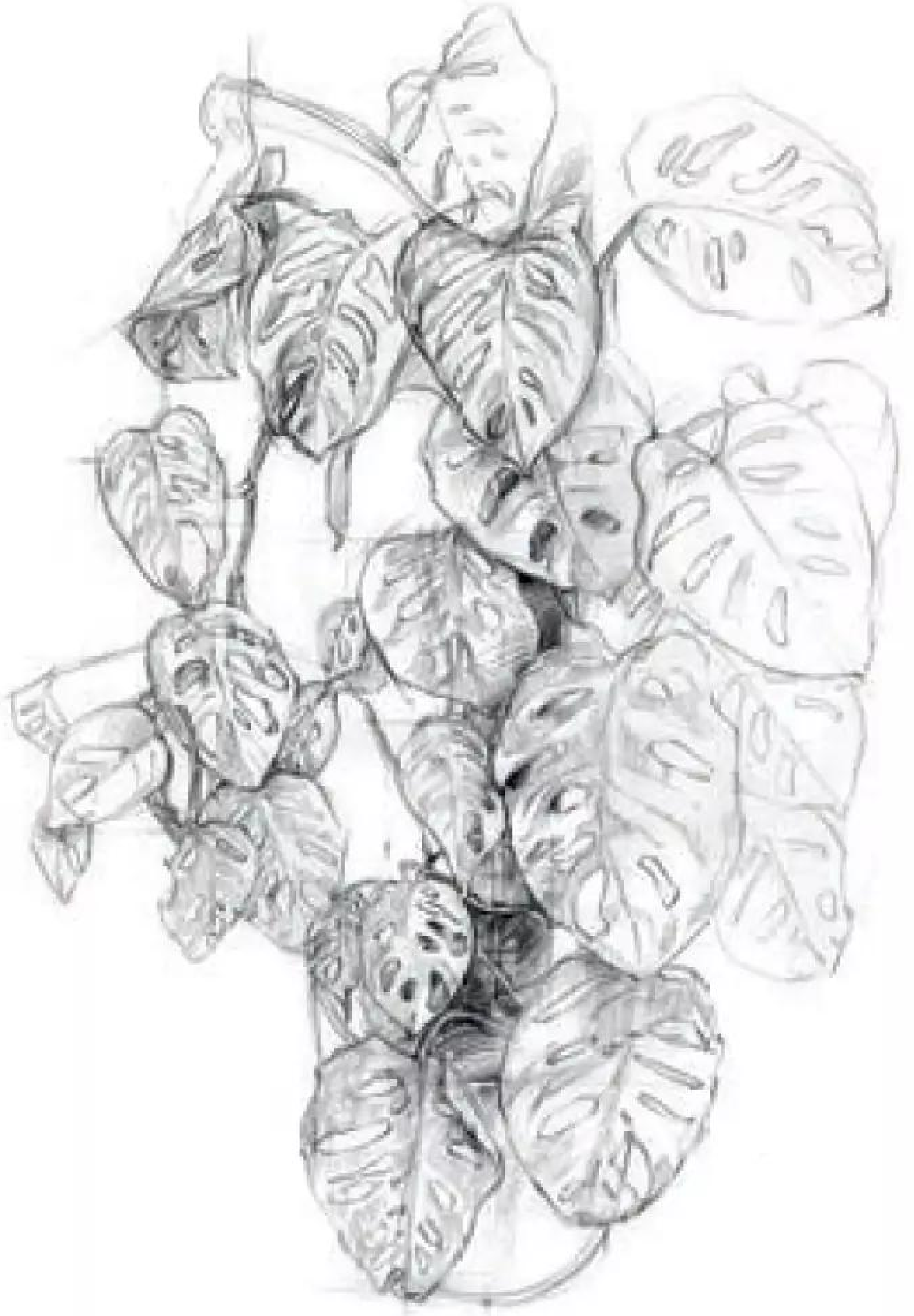
Various techniques and approaches will create different results on paper. The approaches to drawing can be seen a little like music. For example, a new piece of music can be created by combining a set of pre-existing patterns, which lead to a composition that creates the desired outcome. Likewise, the marks for a drawing might be a highly structured approach, such as a jazz-like interpretation of gestural lines that capture the dance of a flamingo or that shatter the world into pieces to reimagine it in a Cubist fashion. Find those approaches that you feel have integrity and that drive in you a genuine curiosity for your subject.

Drawing or sketching?

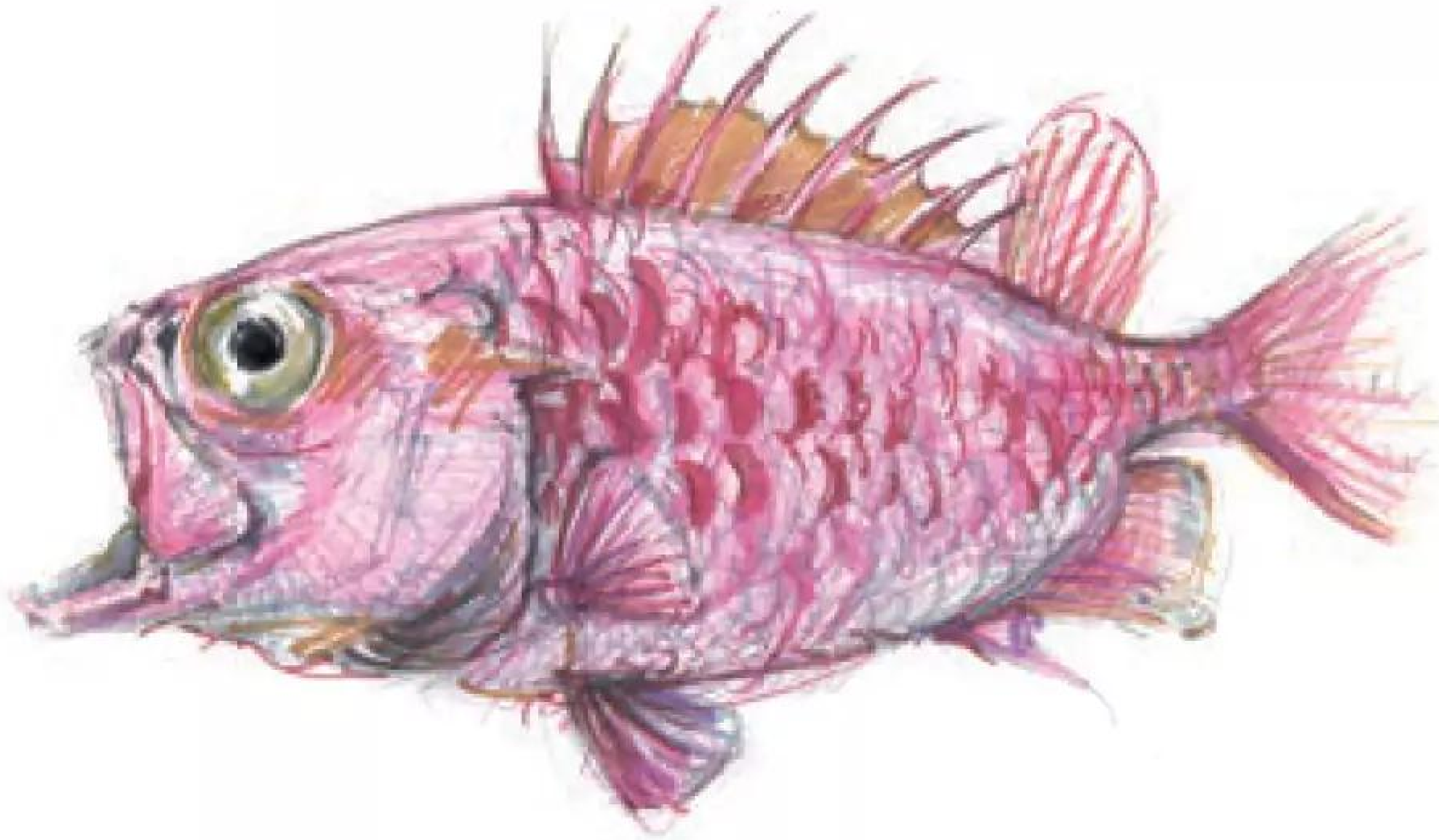
The words 'drawing' and 'sketching' are interchangeable in most contexts, although the following definitions could be loosely applied. Drawing is a more careful and accurate process than sketching, resulting in highly detailed works of art. Drawings can be created from life when the subject holds the pose for an extended period or is static. Sketching is a quick process that focuses on general shapes and proportions. Sketches can be imprecise and fleeting, with just a few lines to capture the essence of the pose.

Finding your own style

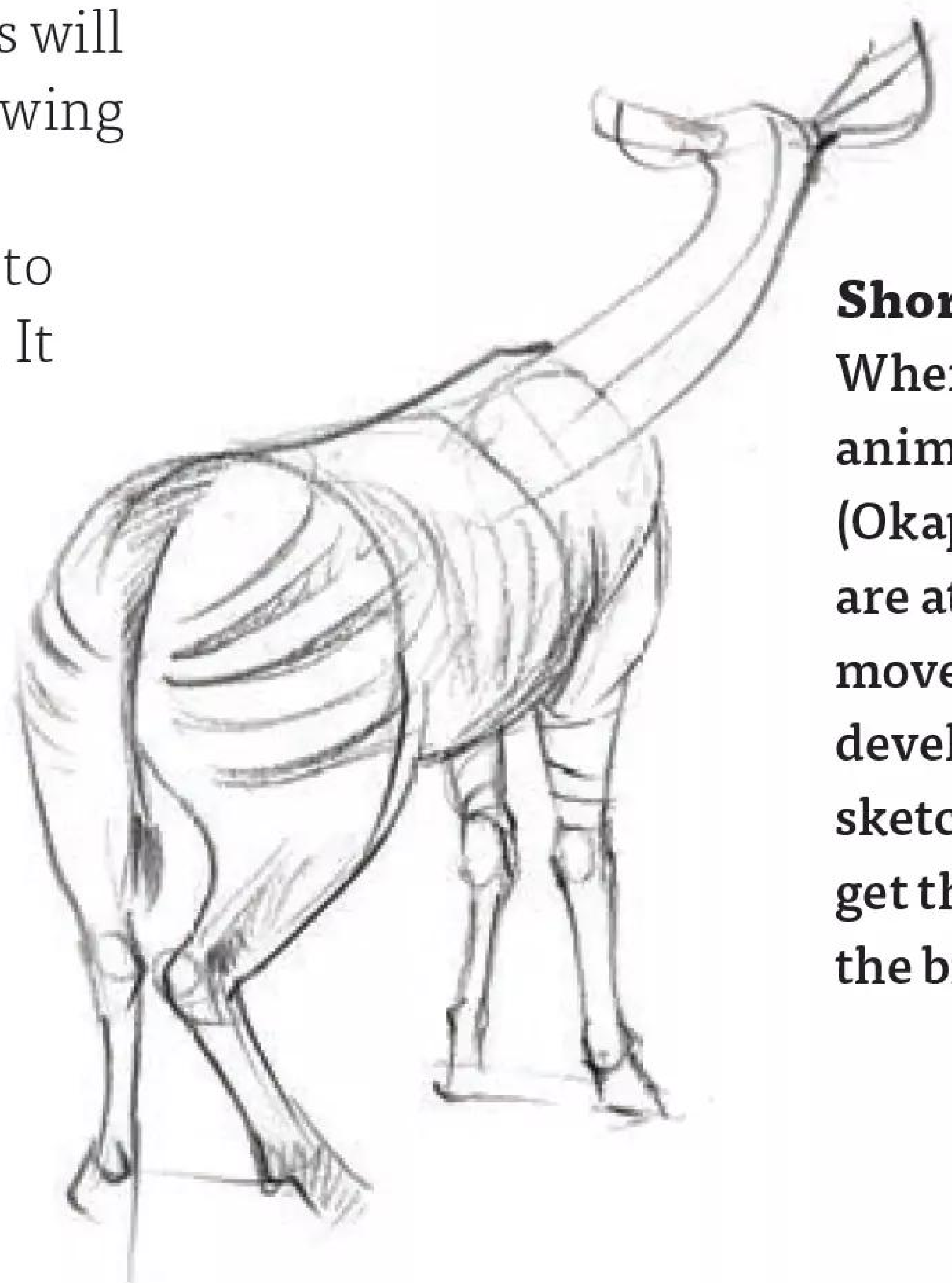
Each artist will create a drawing of the same subject with a different style of mark-making that is as individual as handwriting. This will be obvious if you happen to attend a drawing class. Don't worry about intentionally creating your own style, as this can lead to overly mannered and stylised drawings. It will develop naturally with practice and experimentation. Regardless, it is always useful to look at the drawings created by other artists, which can help you to learn about the different abstract qualities of other approaches and inspire you to experiment with other techniques. □



Extended drawing
Stationary subjects, such as this monstera monkey leaf plant (Monstera adansonii), will allow for more polished renders. These will enable you to use your entire repertoire of skills to realise a drawing with detailed shading.



Mixed media drawings
It is important to play and experiment to find your own style. Mix different media to create expressive and colourful drawings, such as in this Japanese soldierfish (Ostichthys japonicus).



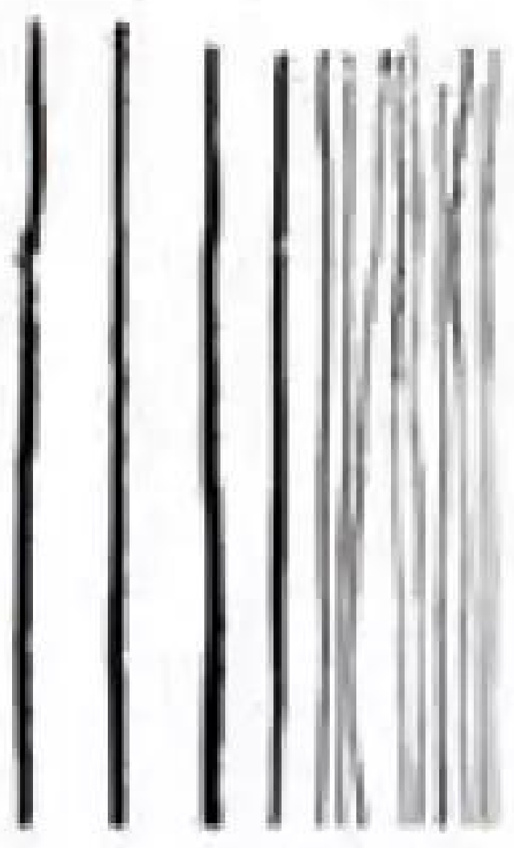
Shorthand drawing style
When drawing live animals, such as this okapi (Okapia johnstoni), you are at the mercy of their movements. Therefore, developing a shorthand sketching style is vital to get the entire body down in the briefest of moments.

Line essentials

The line is my primary means of communication in a drawing, so it is worth taking time to find out what marks your drawing implement can produce to create visual interest. Experiment with a variety of lines in your drawing while you try to capture anything from a gelatinous jellyfish to a sharp piece of flint. A line can be delicate and precise, or it can be bold, expressive and even emotional. The artist's mood and personality can be transmitted through line, so let's look at the different types and see what they can bring to your drawings.

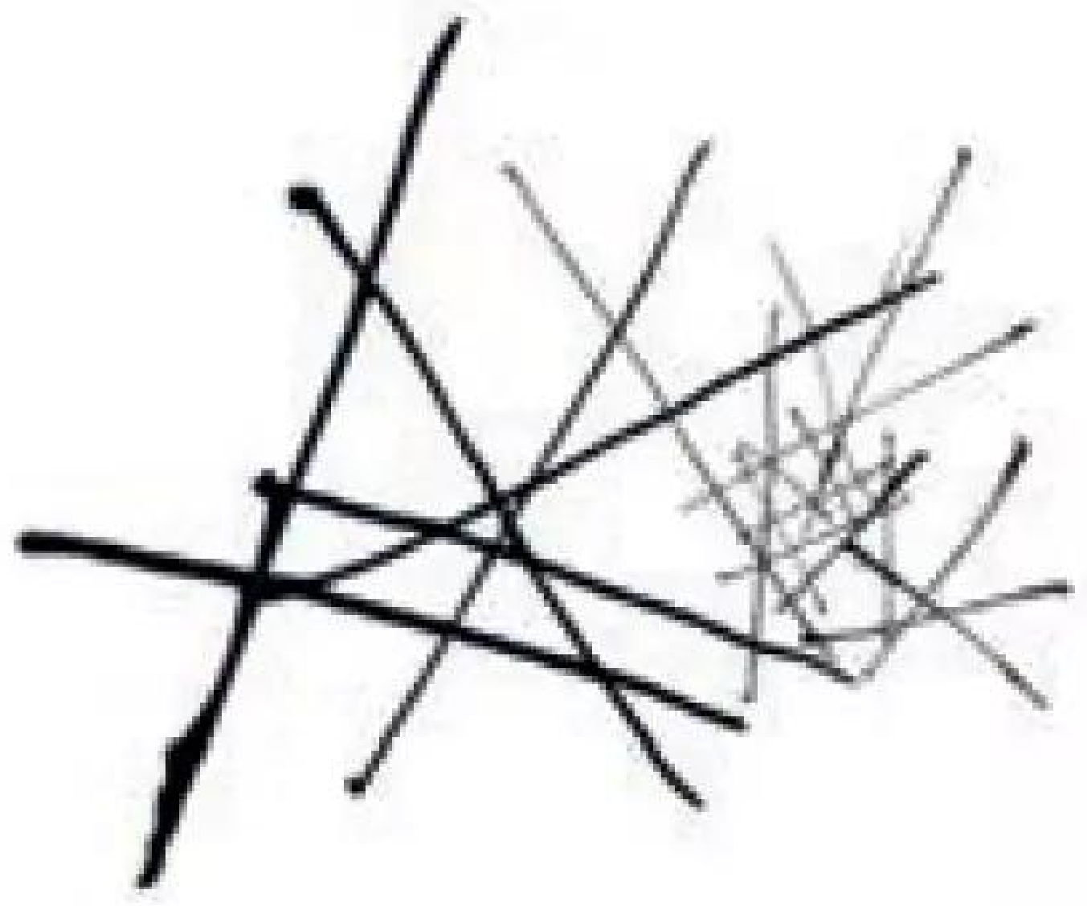
HORIZONTAL LINES

Fields, gently rolling hills, lakes, rivers and ocean scenes have strong horizontal lines. By incrementally widening or decreasing the space between these marks, you can create the impression of depth. Lines that run horizontally give the impression of calmness and rest.



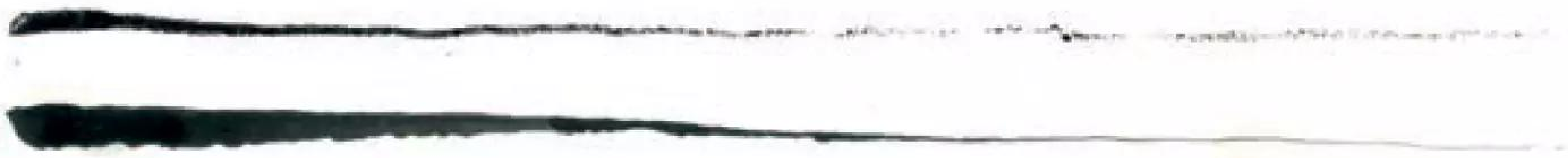
VERTICAL LINES

Vertical lines, such as tall trees, frequently convey a sense of height because they are perpendicular to the earth and stretch upwards towards the sky. These, too, can suggest space and distance by incrementally changing the gap between them.



DIAGONAL LINES

When we look at the natural world, we can see that lines are rarely truly vertical or horizontal but instead are a sea of subtle angles. Diagonal lines create the illusion of movement because we read them as unstable, either as about to fall or as already falling. Extreme opposing angles create dynamism and excitement.

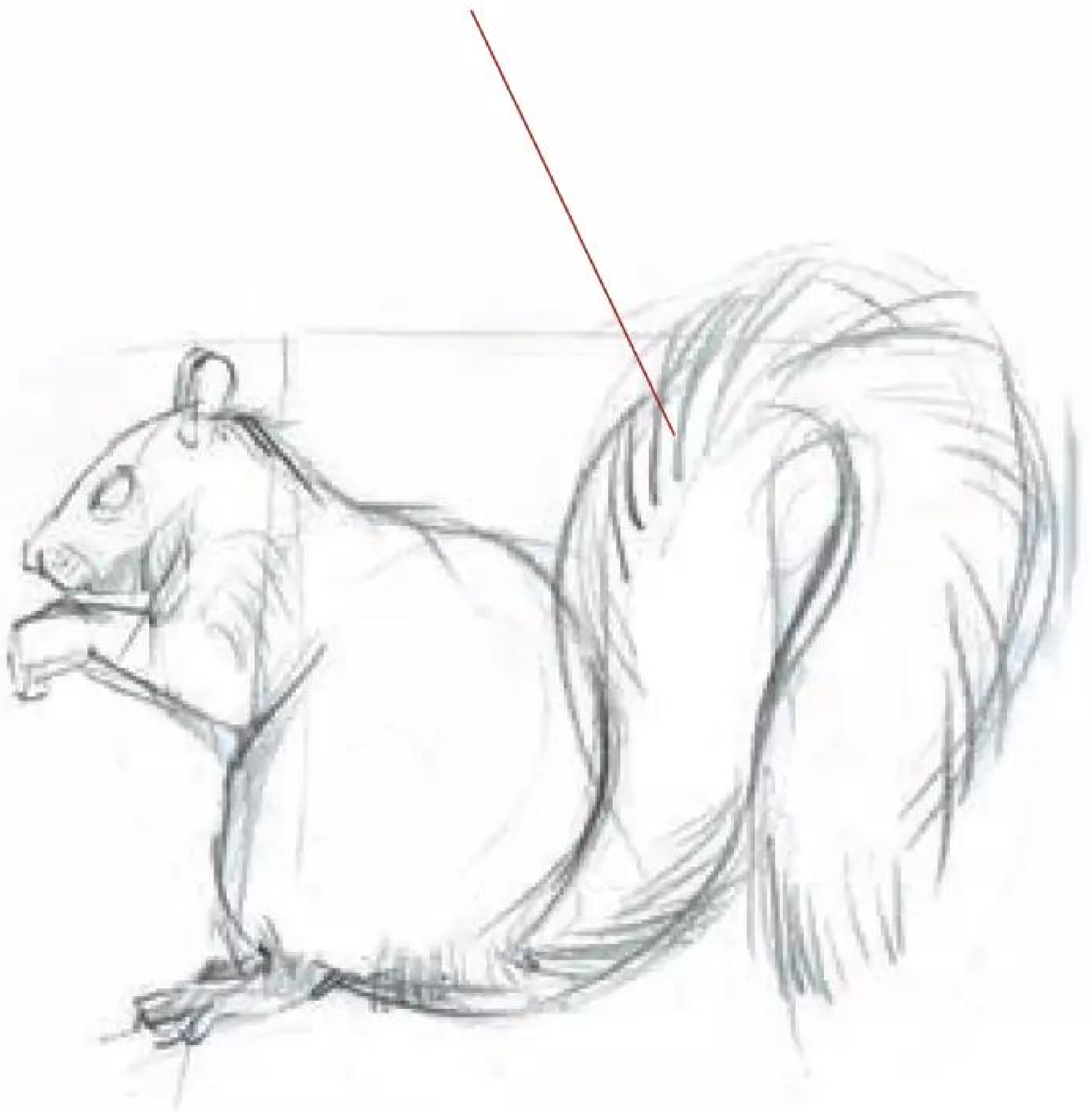


LINE WEIGHT

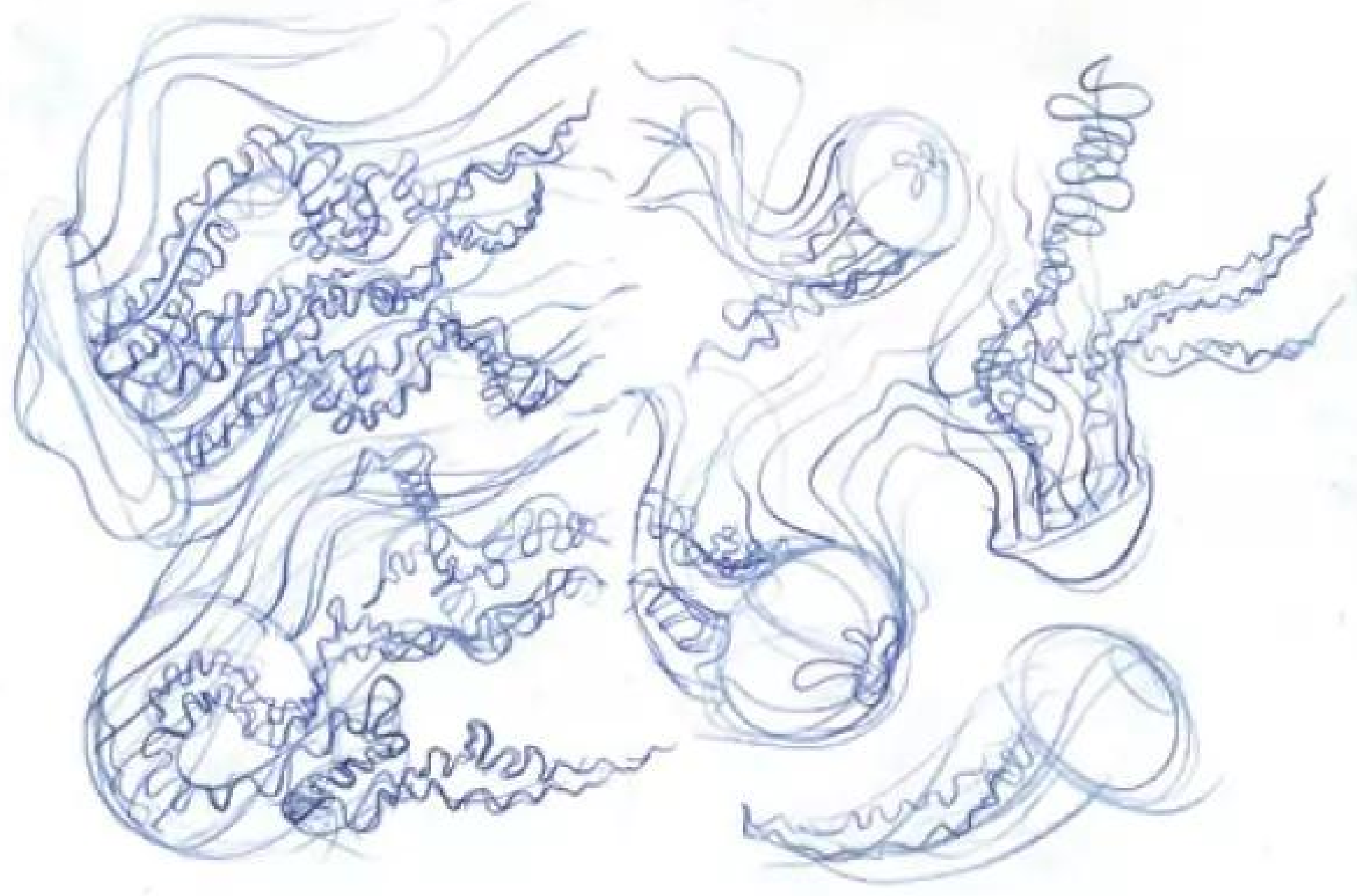
Line weight refers to the thickness of a line – whether it is broad and heavy or fine and delicate. An individual's personality plays a vital role in the marks they naturally gravitate towards creating. The variation in line weight, just as with variety in tonality, can add visual interest to a drawing. Line weight is affected by the amount of pressure applied to the drawing implement – or, in terms of a brush – by diluting the ink or paint with water compared with heavily loading it with saturated pigment. Line thickness can create emphasis, making part of the drawing more dominant. Heavier lines appear to advance towards the eye, whereas light lines recede.

TYPE OF MARK

The type of mark you create should aim to capture the subject's qualities. The veins of a leaf might be delineated with a light touch, whereas the trunk of an oak drawn with a bold emphasis. Flick marks from the wrist could attempt to capture the fur on a squirrel, while fluid wavy lines could suggest the tentacles of a jellyfish.

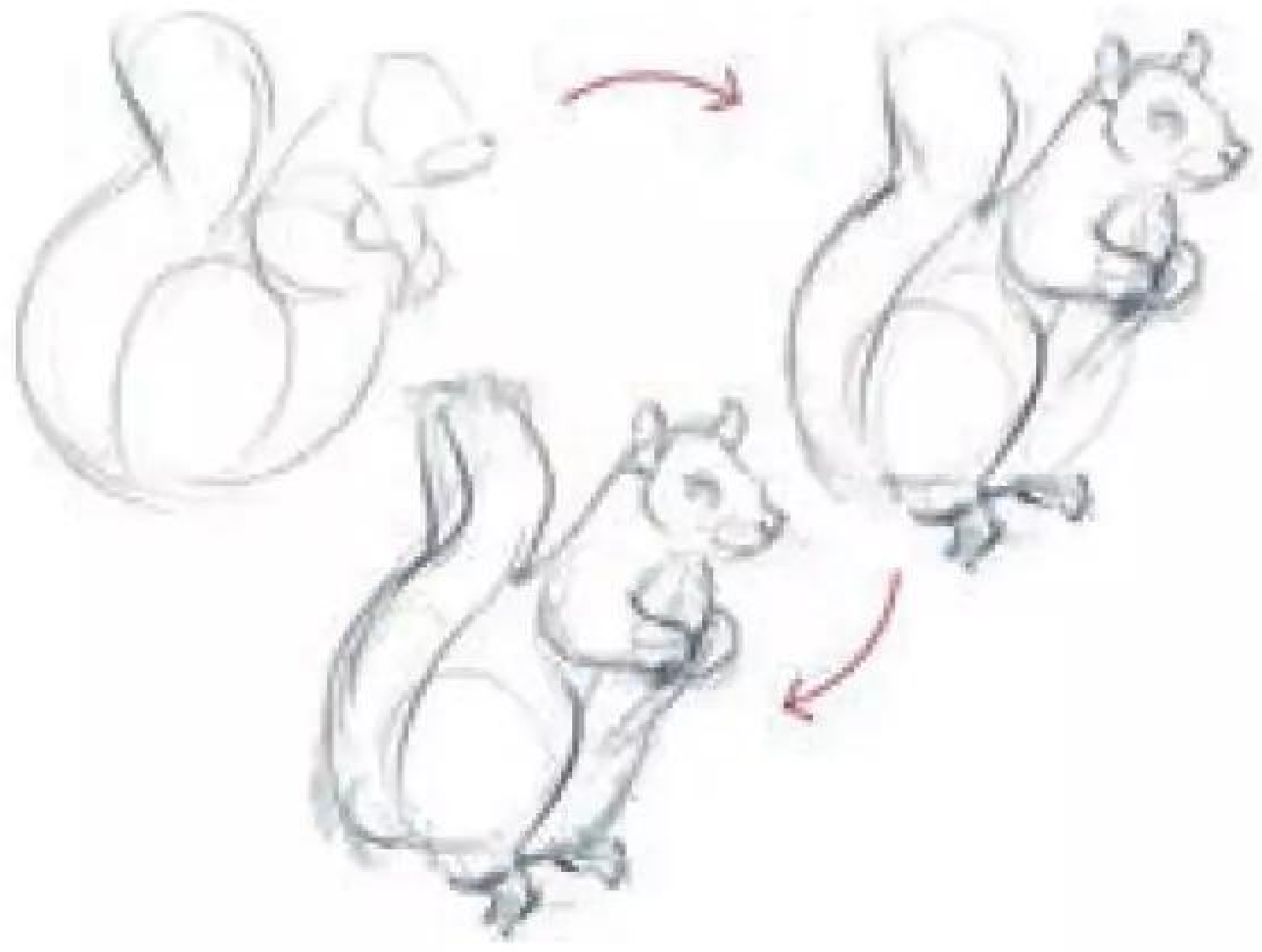


Fur flick marks created from the wrist



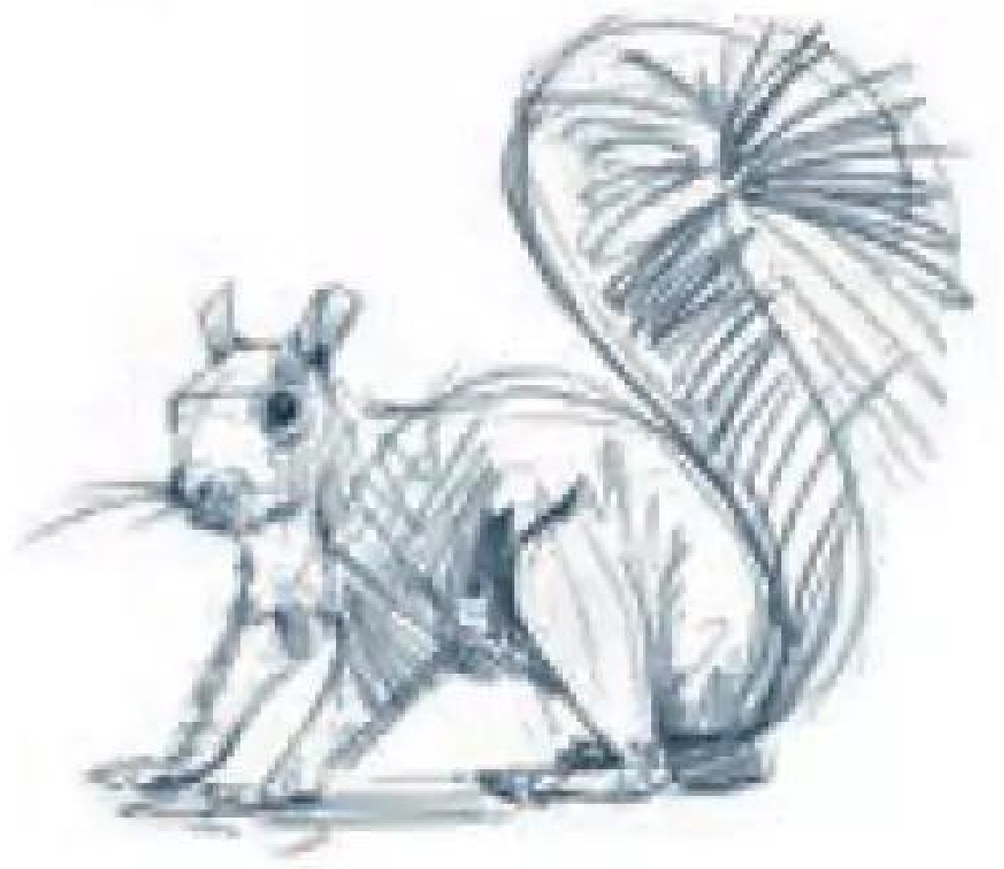
FLUID LINES

To capture movement, ensuring that your studies are not too stiff and wooden, fluid lines are essential. Capturing a jellyfish bloom is the jazz equivalent of drawing in an aquarium – a world in which there doesn't seem to be a right way up or upside down.



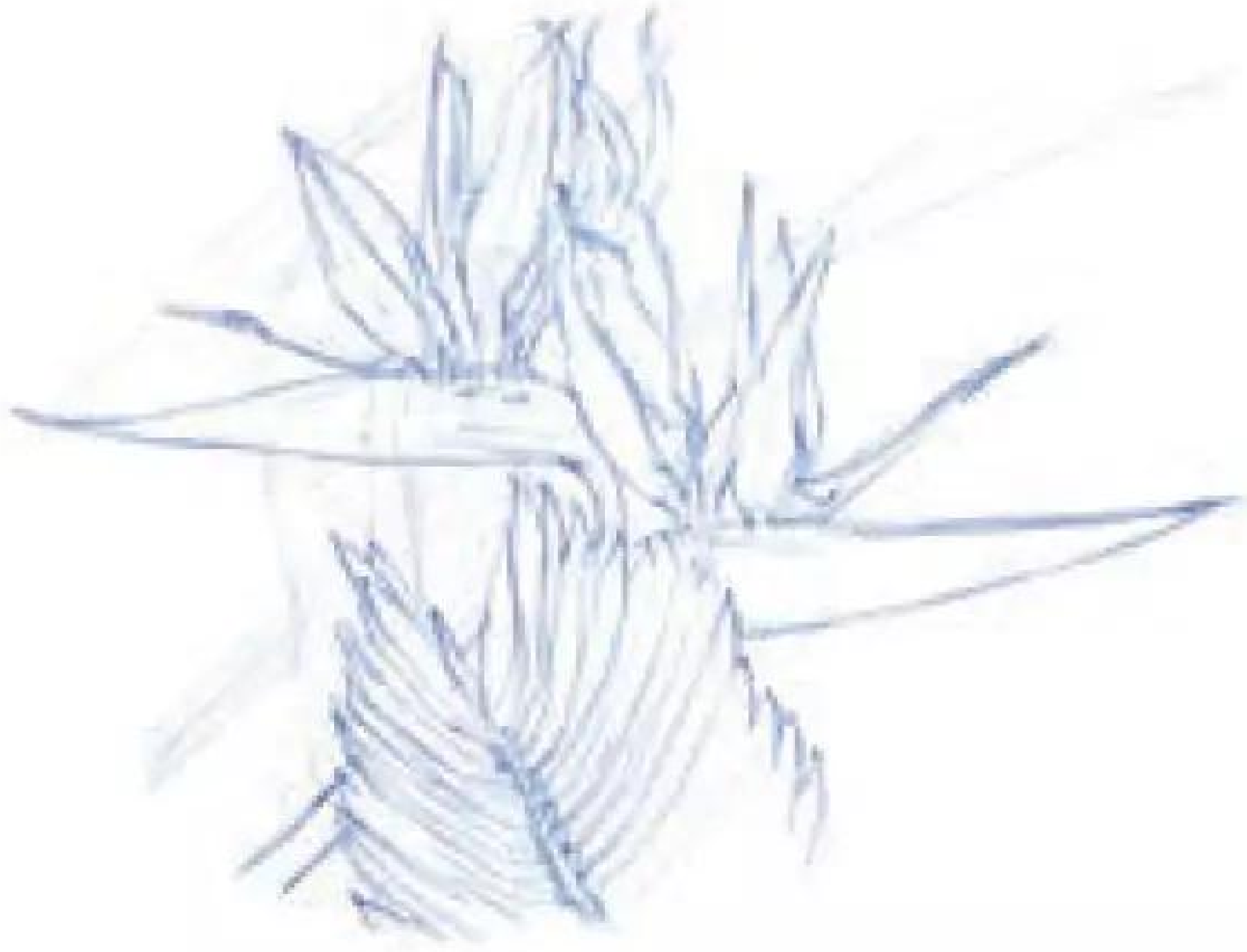
CONSTRUCTION

Build confidence before committing to delineating the edge.



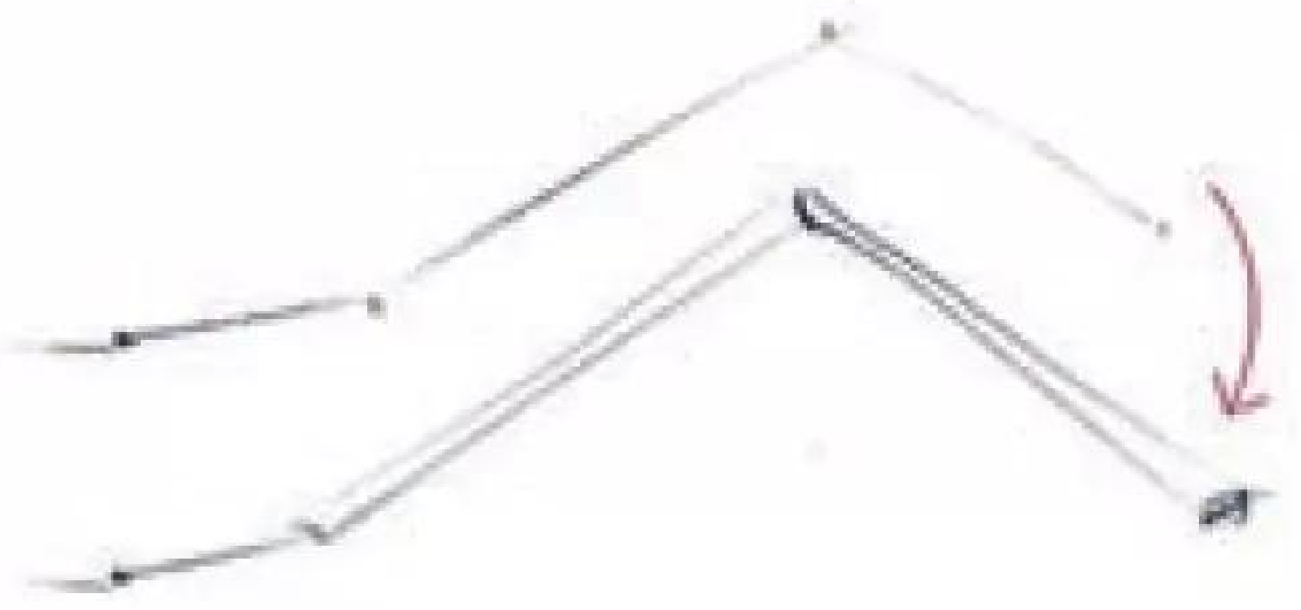
EMOTION

Certain types of lines can conjure up different emotional responses in the viewer in an abstract way. As well as being a necessity to capture the creature before it leaps away, the fast, vigorous lines of a field sketch created quickly can be a conscious choice made by the artist. I also find the quiet line of precision can be equally moving.



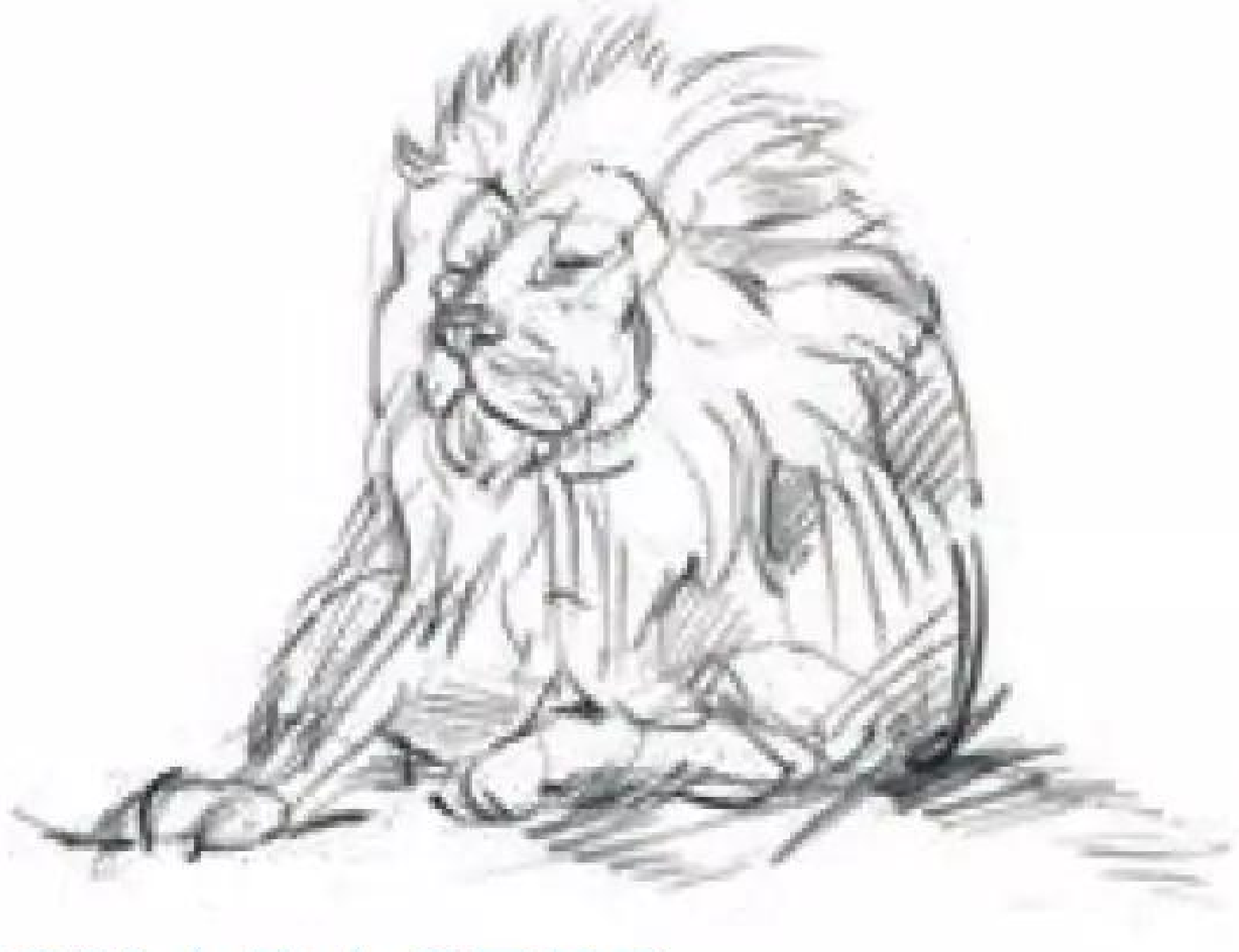
COLOURING PENCIL DRAWINGS

Along with graphite pencils, I draw with high-quality, waxy colouring pencils. Drawing with colours feels like a new beginning and helps you get past any negative feelings towards a graphite line. Practise regularly to create a quick sketching style that incorporates a variety of line styles. Combine contour, hatched lines and textural marks to develop a shorthand style to use anywhere, from *en plein air* to museums and zoos.



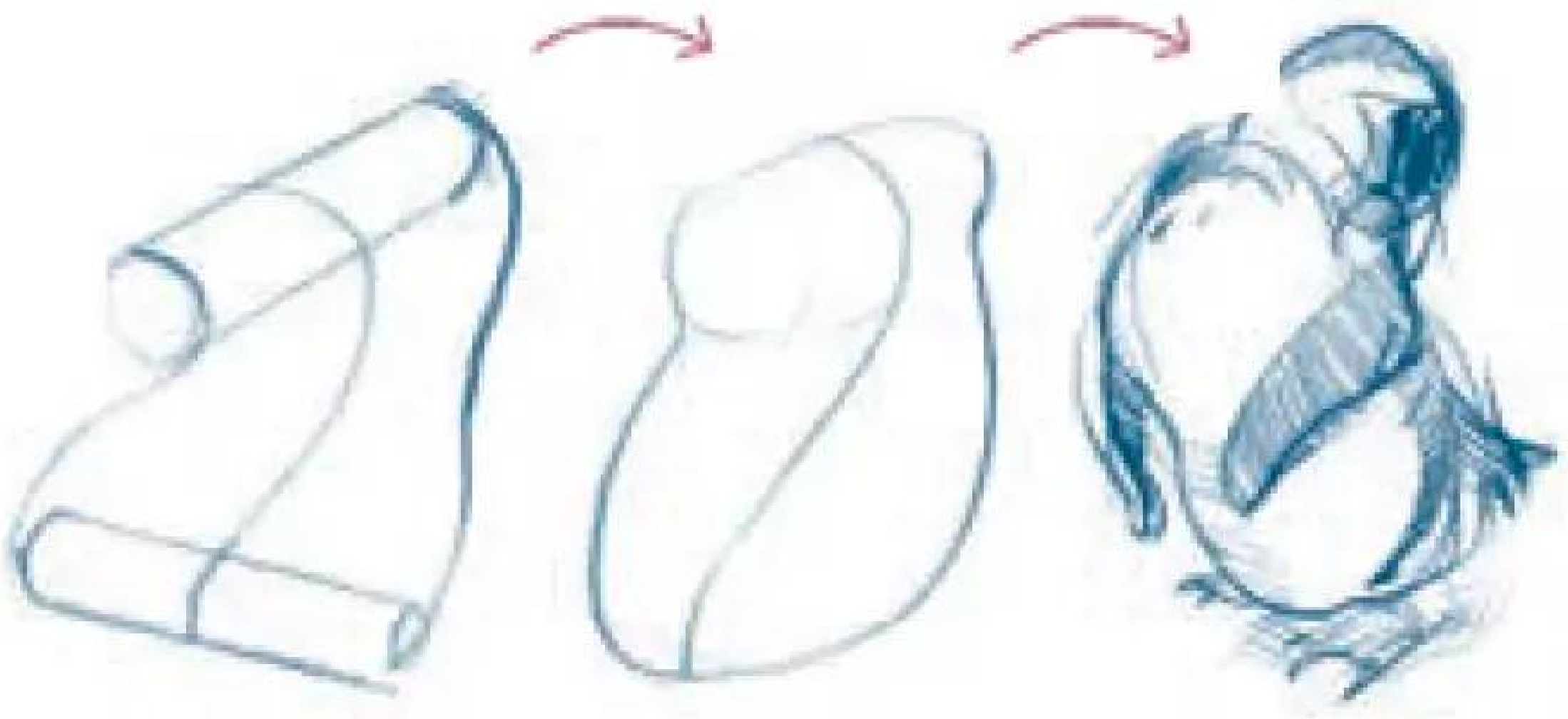
SKELETON AND STRUCTURE

You can use skeletal lines to plot out and plan your drawing. A concave mark can give the feeling of structure and support, from a butterfly to a giraffe's legs.



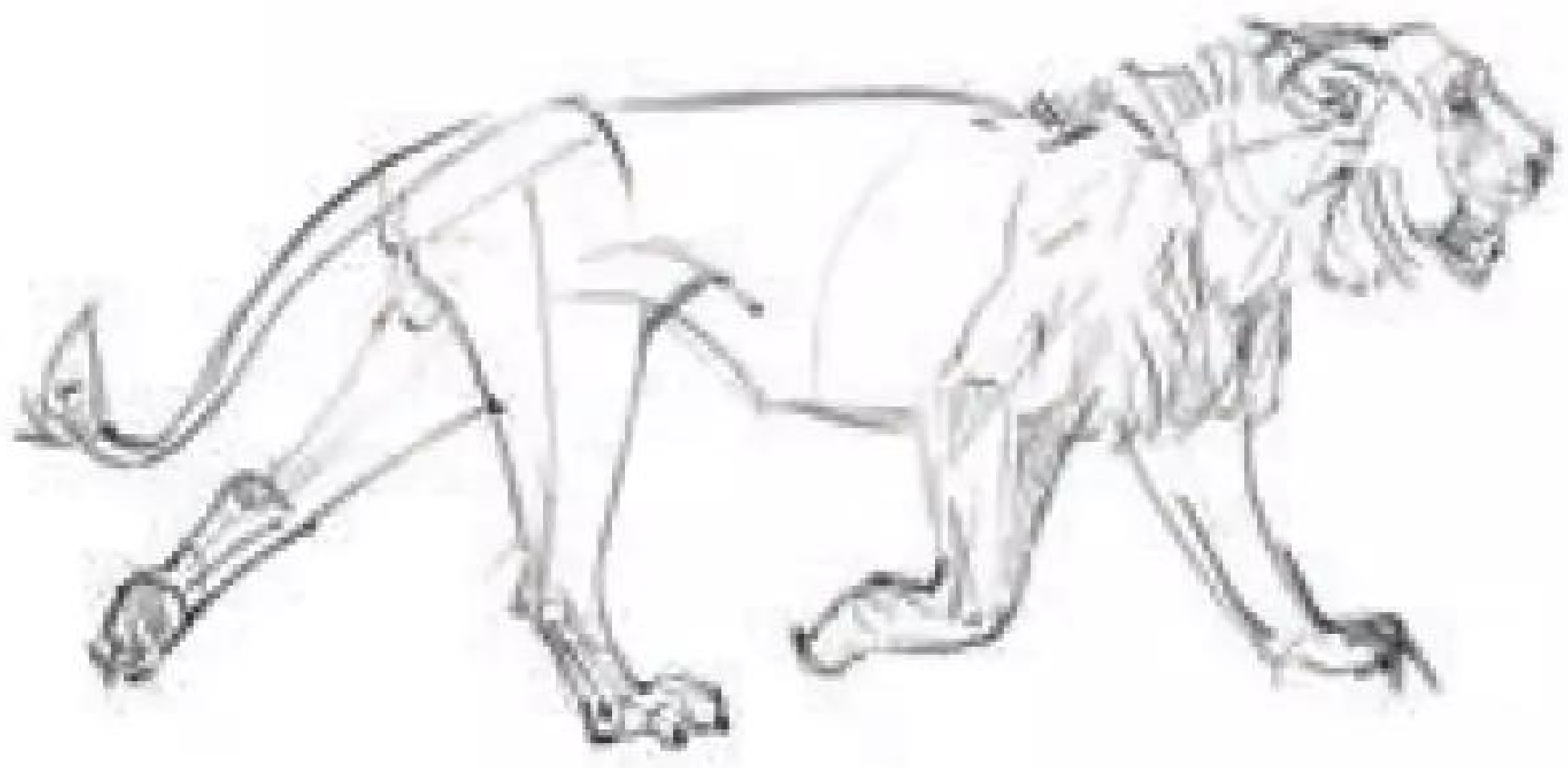
CHARACTER

Combinations of different abstract lines can combine to capture the subject's character and emotional state. Try to empathise with these characteristics as you sketch, such as a male lion's pride.



ELASTICITY, TORQUE AND TENSION

Create dynamic torsos in action by energising bent shapes. In 'contrapposto,' the figure's shoulders twist against the hips to create a dynamic twist of the torso. This gives life to static figures, imbuing them with a natural sense of movement, which might equally be seen in a penguin, for example.

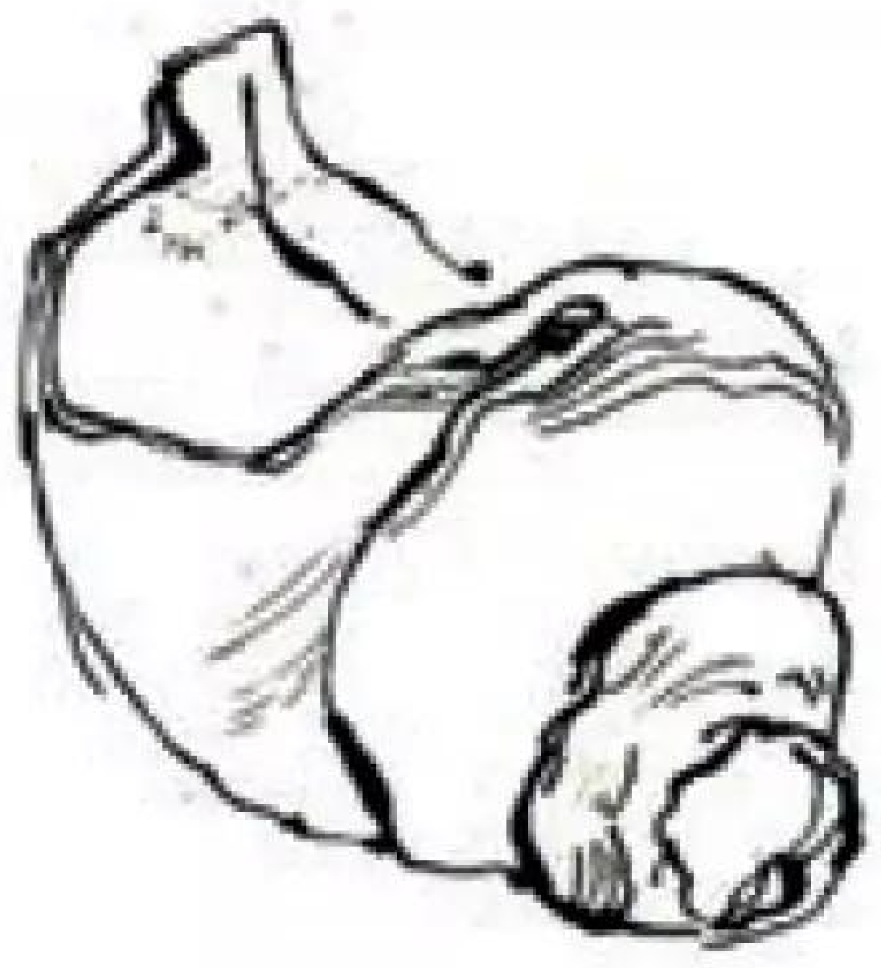


GESTURE

A gestural line is an energetic sketch of an animal in action, created in seconds.

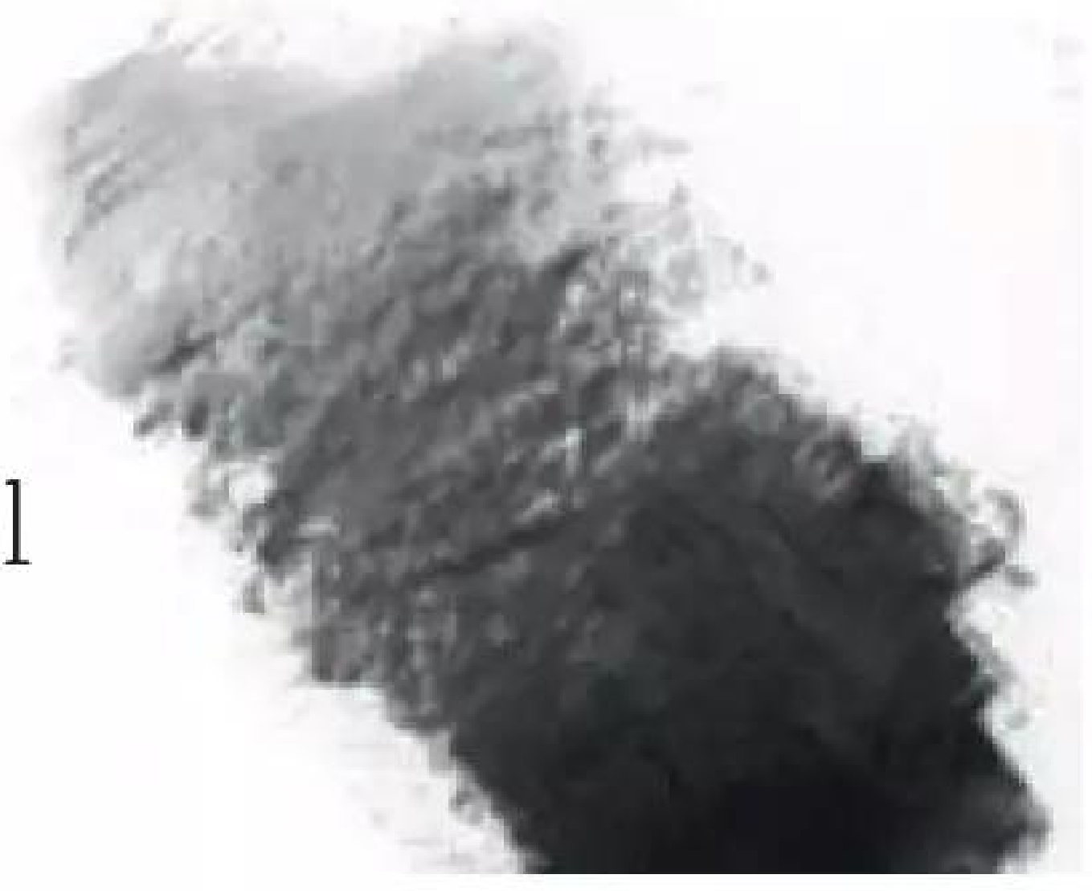
CONTOUR

Create heavy lines that really bite into the character and shape of the form.



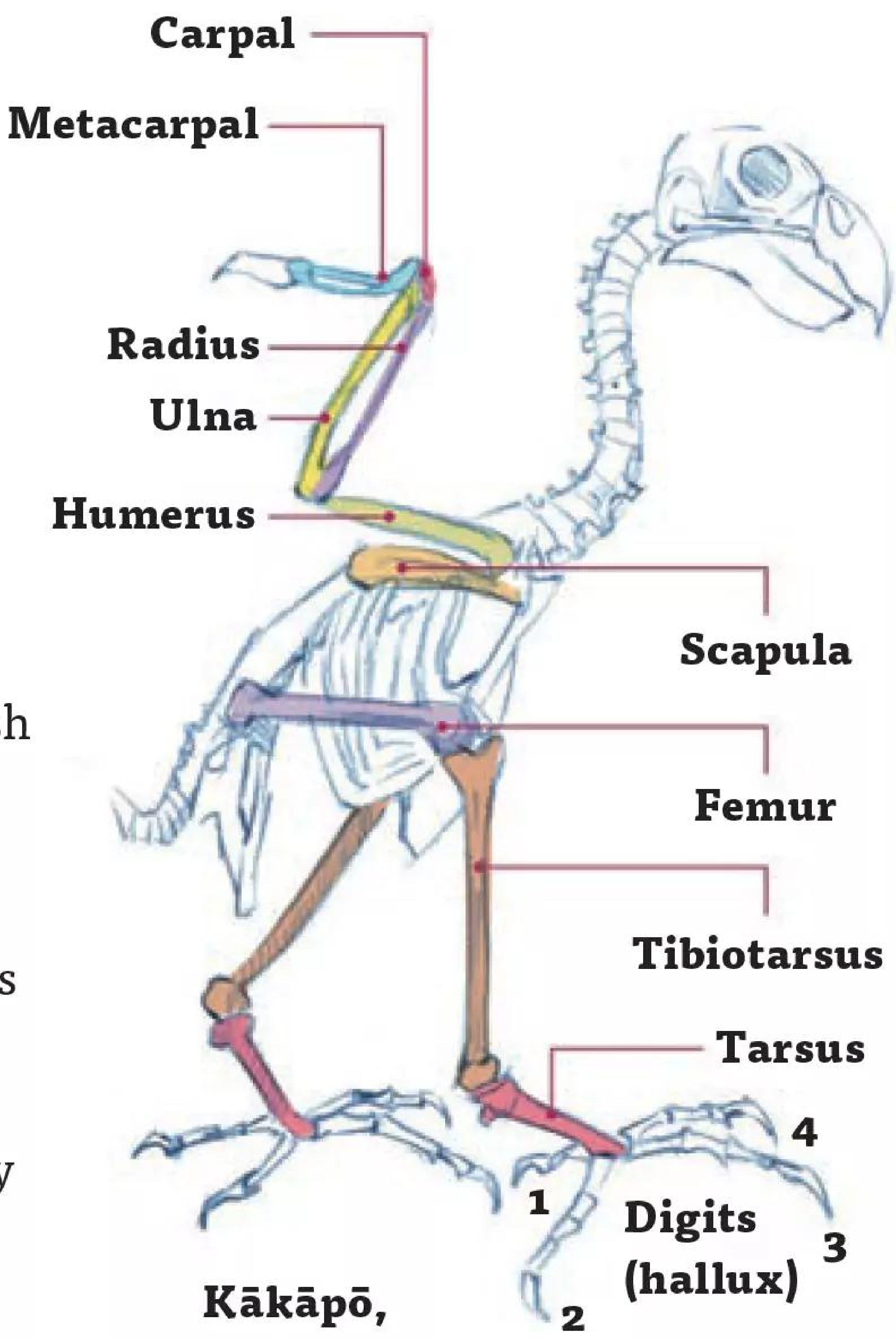
ATMOSPHERE

Charcoal can make very light or intensely black lines with a host of mid-range tonal values, all of which can create different moods. □



Bones

Bones create an internal armature that on some animals, such as an elephant or cow, appear quite stiff and rigid, but on others, such as the cheetah, they are gracile, loose and flexible, allowing for an incredible dexterity of movement. We will look closely at all tetrapods, a superclass of animals that includes all limbed vertebrates (backboned animals) that constitutes amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. All these types of animals evolved from a common ancestor some 400 million years ago from a species of lobe-finned fish that came out of the sea, looking a bit like a salamander (except that it wasn't a true salamander, at least not yet). Now, hundreds of millions of years later, its descendants, including us, have taken over the land. These include snakes and whales, which lack four limbs but are still considered tetrapods because they evolved from animals with four limbs. Look for similar bones in these animals, whether they are adapted to hopping, walking and running, digging, flying, climbing or swimming. To draw convincing tetrapods, it is essential to see beneath the skin to the armature on which hangs suspended muscles, fat and skin.



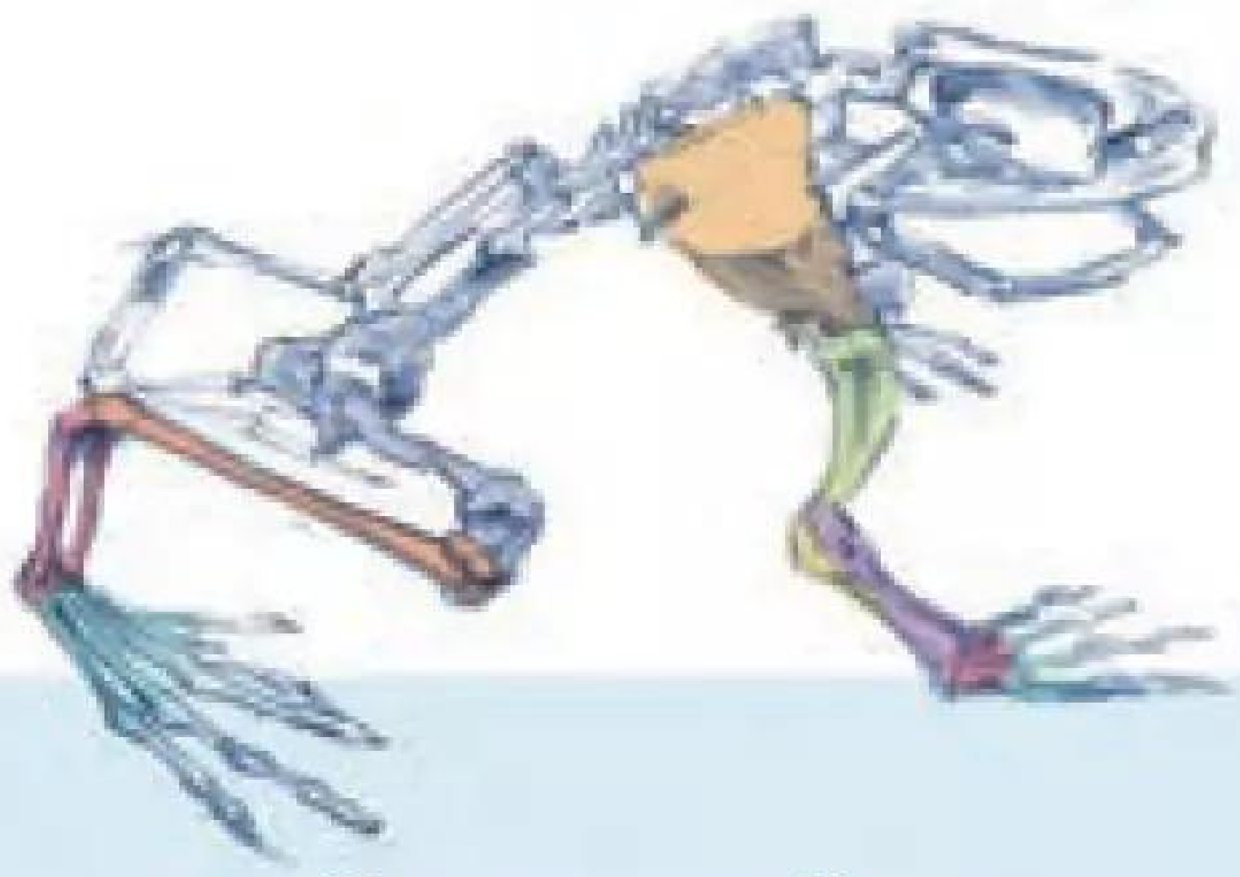
Kākāpō,
or owl parrot
(Strigops habroptilus)

CONSTRUCTION AND STRUCTURE

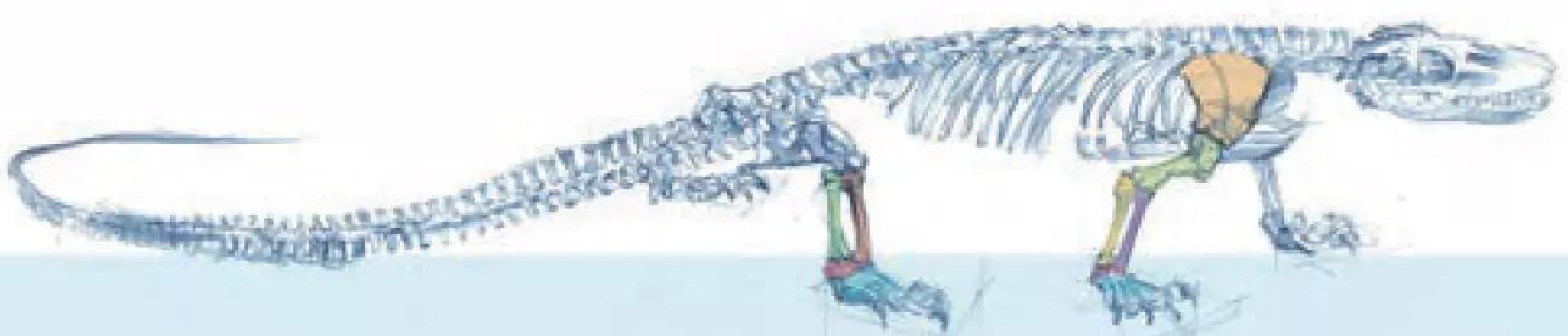
Understanding where the bones are beneath the skin will help to give your sketches a feeling of structure and prevent the subjects from looking like soft toys. It will also provide you with an understanding of the pivot points, which are the points of articulation, such as the shoulder and hip (ball and socket), elbow and knee (hinge), wrist (radial) and ankle (hinge). There are additional pivot points in your fingers and thumb, toes and neck. Some animals have highly mobile tails for balance and communication – howler monkeys even have a prehensile tail that can act like an additional limb.

COMPARATIVE LIMBS

Richard Owen published *On the Nature of Limbs* in 1849. In it, he graphically demonstrated that all vertebrate species were built on the same skeletal plan and devised the vertebrate archetype. Richard Owen noted that they were all the same bones in the same order, although some of these body plans had become specialised. A komodo's front feet have become powerful claws for digging burrows. The skin between the fingers of a bat's hand has become webbed for flight, in a similar fashion to a duck's foot for swimming. So while the outside appearance of all tetrapods is incredibly diverse, from the rear fluke of a swimming dugong (a sea cow) to the high viewpoint of a giraffe's long neck (which still has seven cervical vertebrae like humans) overseeing the African savannahs, they all share this remarkably similar body plan. At times they can be hard to comprehend, whether the breathtaking repeating vertebrae and ribs or the lost limbs of a snake. □

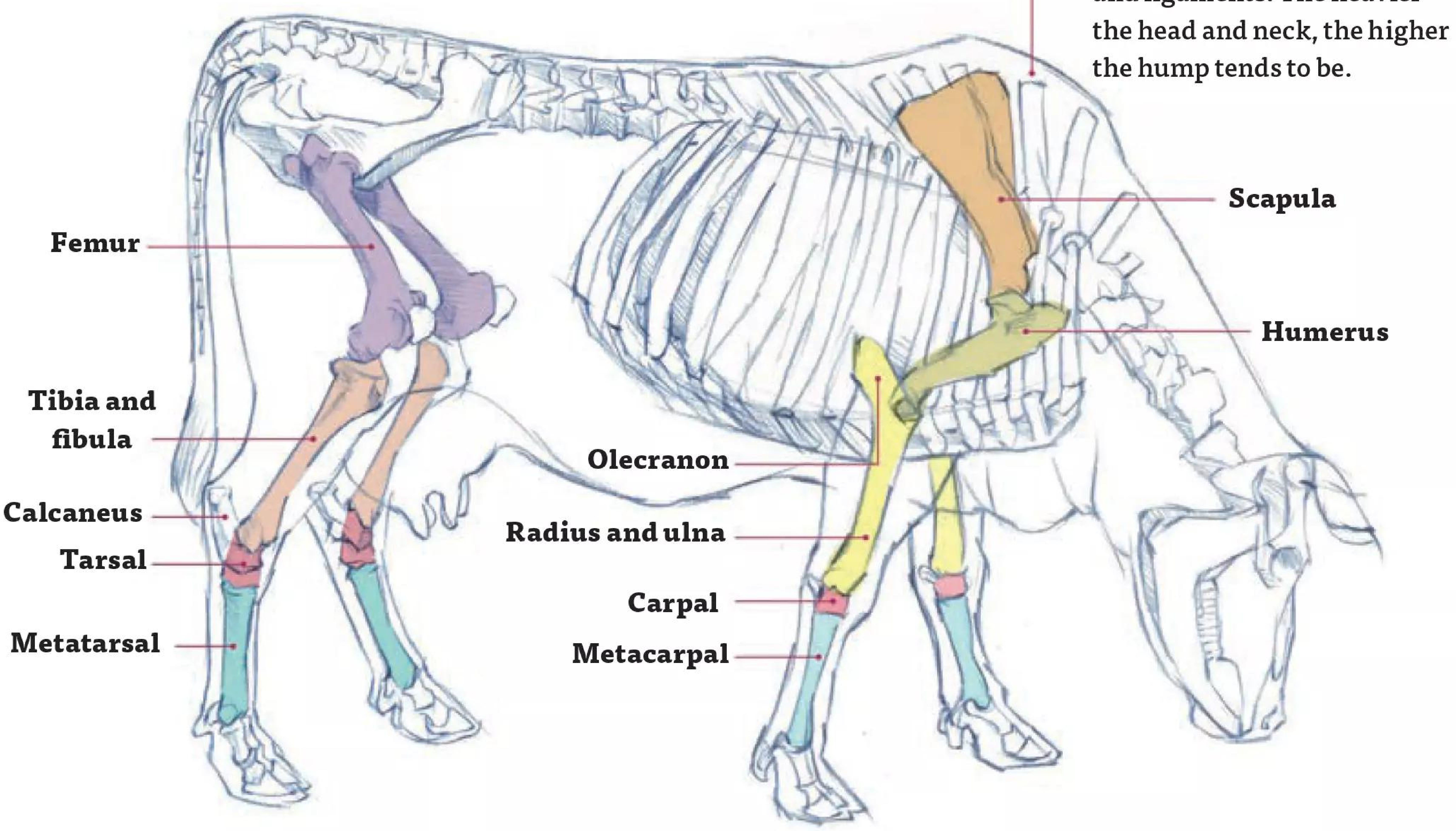


Common frog
(Rana temporaria)



Komodo dragon
(Varanus komodoensis)

Cow
(Bos taurus)


Femur
Tibia and fibula
Calcaneus
Tarsal
Metatarsal
Olecranon
Radius and ulna
Carpal
Metacarpal
Scapula
Humerus

Thoracic vertebrae
The long thoracic vertebrae can support the weight of the head with strong muscles and ligaments. The heavier the head and neck, the higher the hump tends to be.

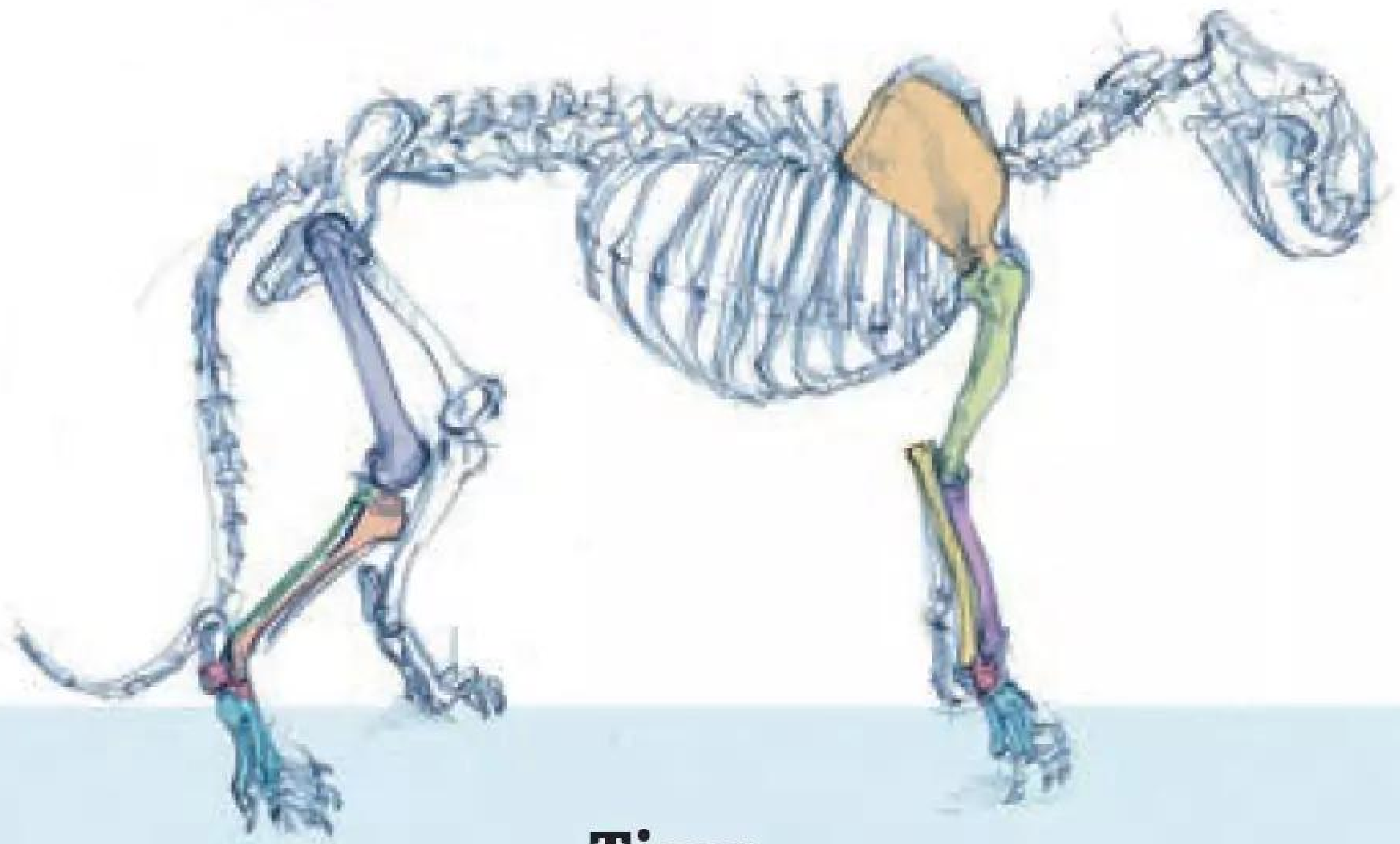
Arm/forelimb

- 🟧 Scapula
- 🟩 Humerus
- 🟪 Radius
- 🟨 Ulna
- 🟥 Carpal
- 🟦 Metacarpal

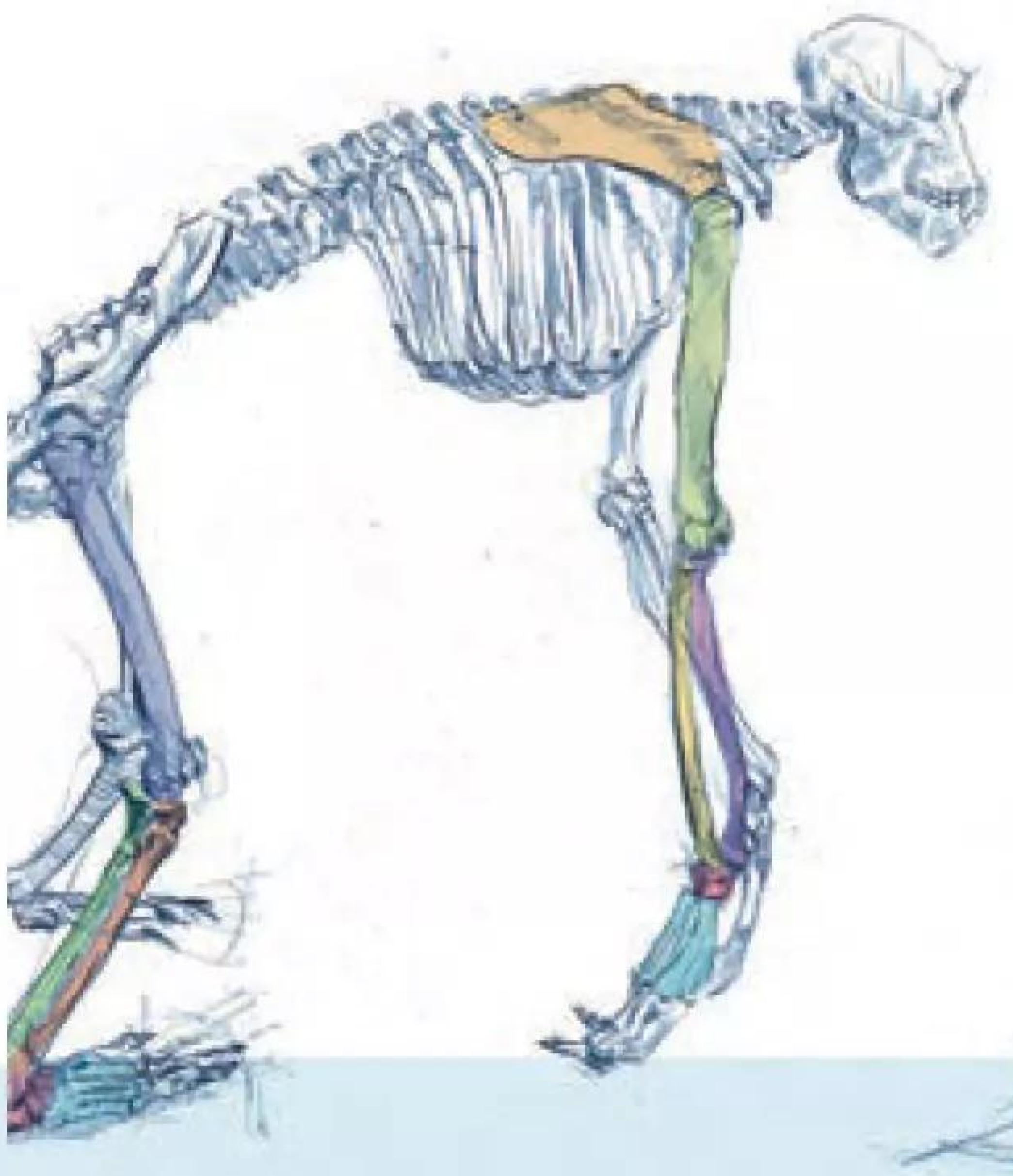
Leg/hindlimb

- 🟦 Femur
- 🟧 Tibia
- 🟩 Fibula
- 🟥 Tarsal
- 🟦 Metatarsal

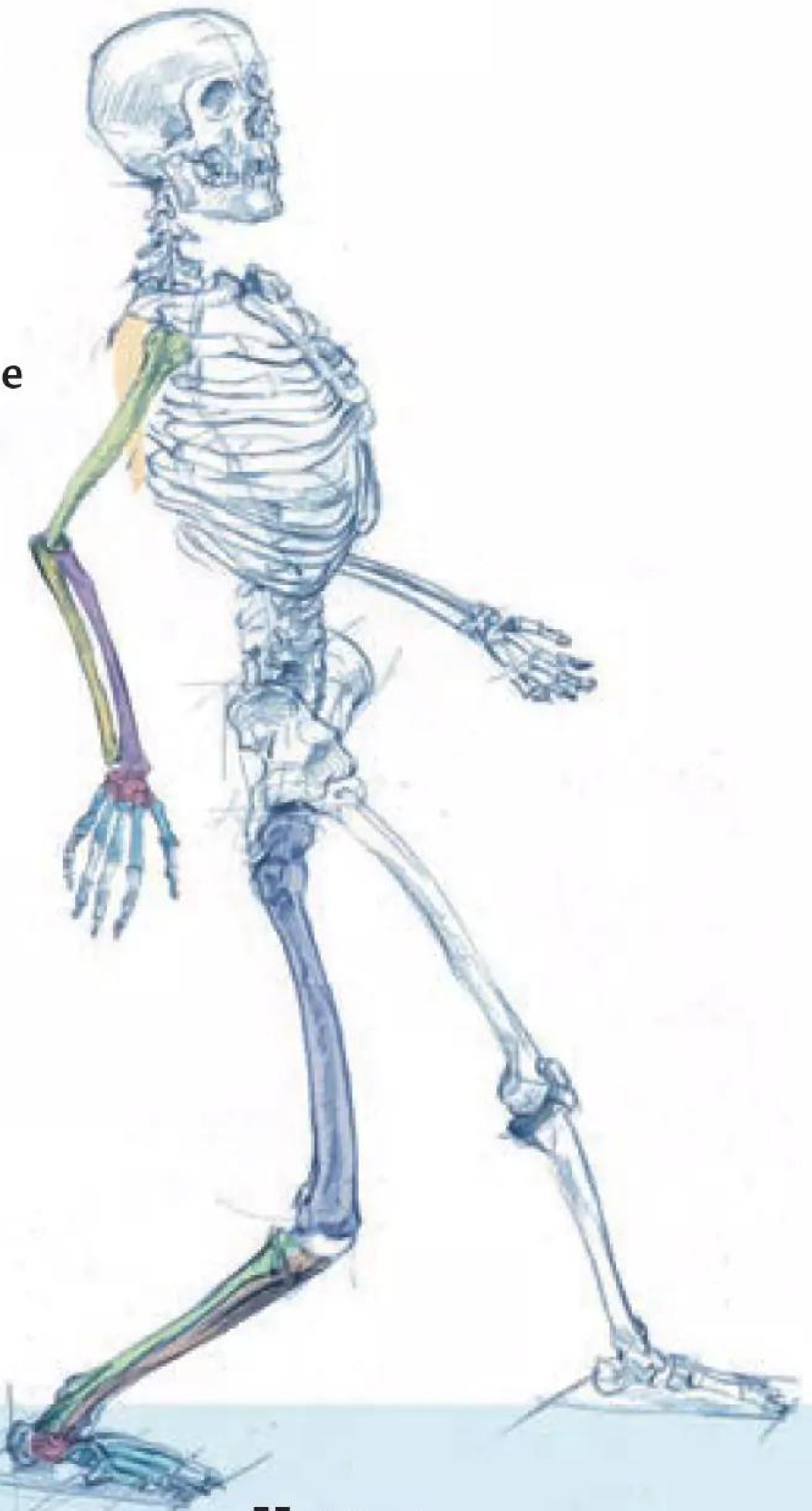
Same bones, but different skeletons
Divergent evolution has led to homologous limbs, which means they have the same relative position, value or structure. The limbs of humans, apes, cats, lizards and frogs are examples of homologous structures. All of these structures – the arm, leg, flipper and wing – are supported by the same arrangement of bones beneath.



Tiger
(Panthera tigris)



Chimpanzee
(Pan troglodytes)



Human
(Homo sapiens)

Posture and gait

Understanding what we are seeing is equivalent to decoding the mysterious world of nature that surrounds us. Knowing about the three hand and foot archetypes that apply to the large group of tetrapods can help us to draw them more accurately. Understanding where the heel bone or wrist is located, for example, will help us understand the points of articulation and weight distribution and enable us to more convincingly draw the way the body is being supported in all sorts of poses.

MANNERS OF WALKING

There are three primary arrangements of the limbs of the tetrapods that move over solid ground. Knowing what is going on beneath the skin is beneficial to create a feeling of structure.

Plantigrade

In terrestrial animals, plantigrade locomotion means walking with the toes and metatarsal bones and heels planted flat on the ground. The primary advantages of a plantigrade foot are stability and weight-bearing ability because plantigrade feet have the largest surface area. The primary disadvantage of a plantigrade foot is the lack of speed. To remember this stance, think of the foot being planted on the floor.

Wolverines are powerful predators and scavengers with plantigrade feet that have five toes on each foot. Its padded feet help it walk in the snow.

DIGITIGRADE

In terrestrial vertebrates, digitigrade locomotion is created by walking or running on the toes. A digitigrade animal stands or walks with its toes touching the ground, but the rest of its foot, particularly the heel, is raised. Digitigrades generally move more quickly and quietly than other animals, making them excellent predators. I think of a digitigrade stance primarily as tiptoeing to make a quiet ambush. Most birds are classified as digitigrade animals, meaning they walk on their toes rather than the entire foot.

Not all digitigrades are predators. A rabbit's survival depends upon how fast it moves and so has digitigrade feet. Their hind legs are longer than their front legs, which allows them to accelerate quickly from a still position. Wild rabbits can reach an incredible speed of up to 45 mph (70 km/h), whereas domestic rabbits tend to be slower at 30 mph (50 km/h).

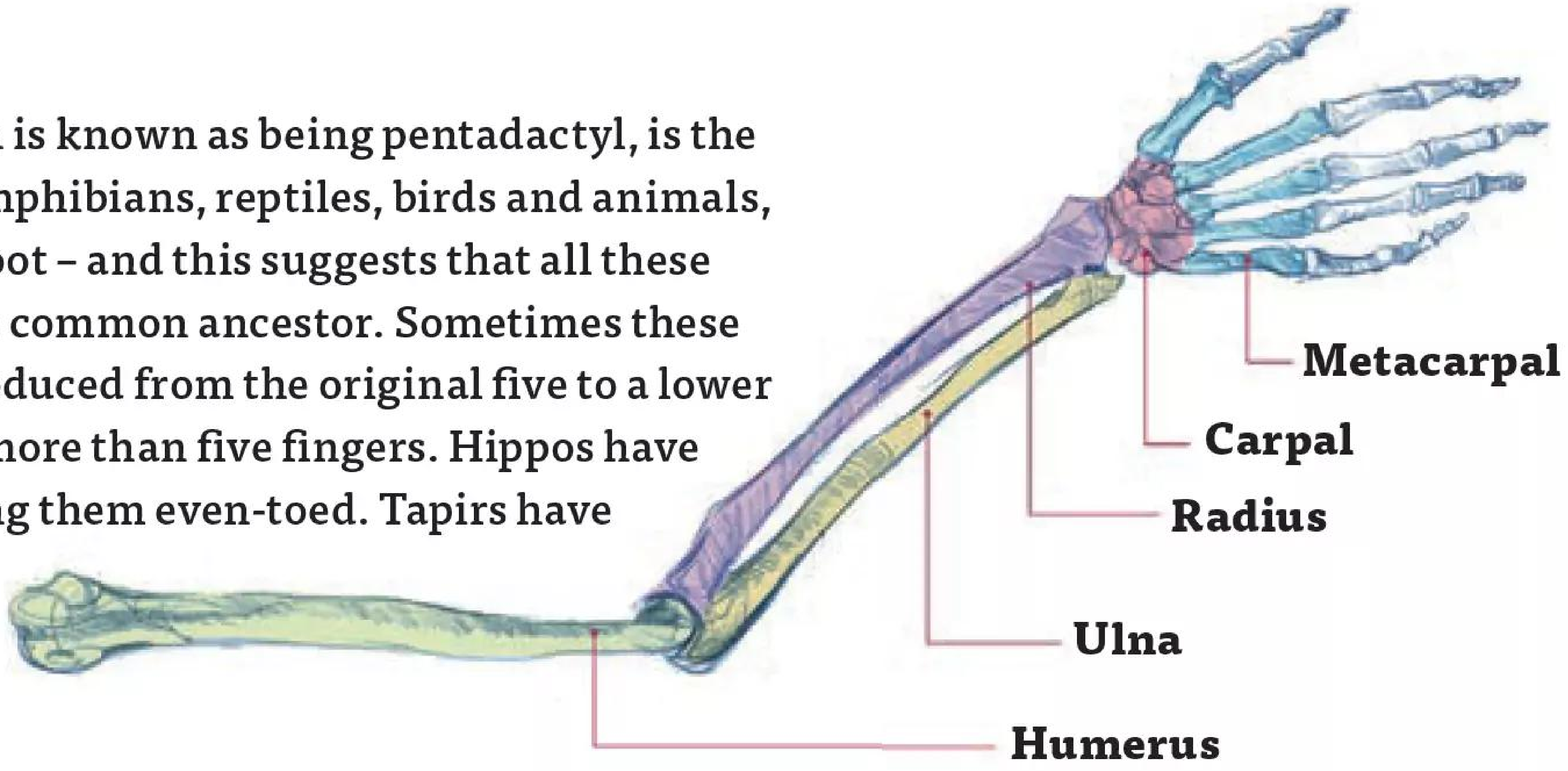
Unguligrade

The group of large mammals that are distinguished from other animals by the presence of hooves are known as ungulates. These include odd-toed ungulates, such as horses and rhinoceroses, and even-toed ungulates, such as deer and hippopotamuses. Equids – the horse, zebra and donkey – are the only species with a single hoof.

It helps to know about how many toes an animal has when sketching in the field. Most terrestrial ungulates use the hoofed tips of their toes to support their body weight while standing or moving. In addition, the payoff for lengthening their fore and hind legs for a quick spring of escape is that both the radius and ulna in the arms and the tibia and fibula in the legs have become fused. □

Pentadactyl limb

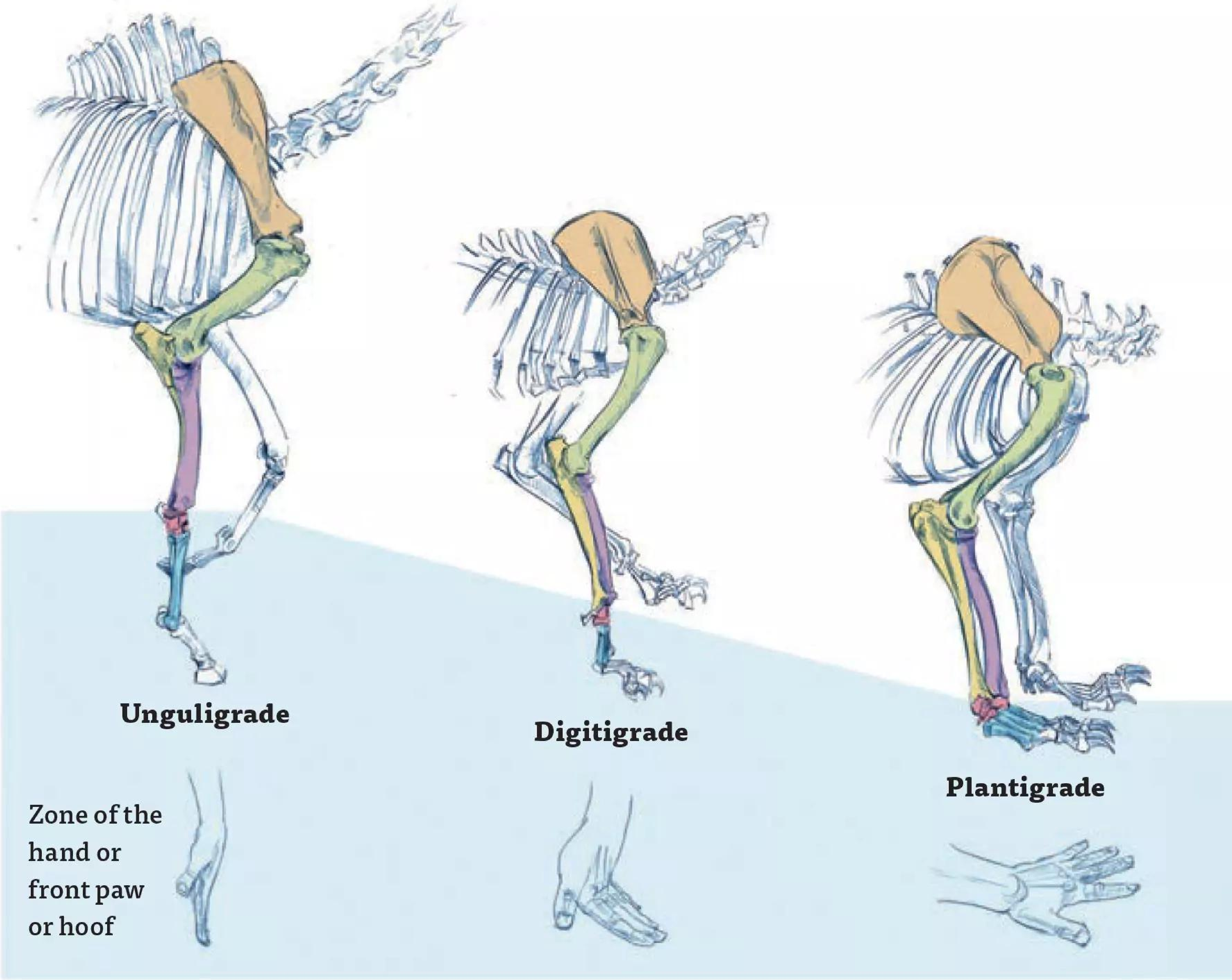
A limb with five digits, which is known as being pentadactyl, is the basic template found in all amphibians, reptiles, birds and animals, including a human hand or foot – and this suggests that all these animals are derived from one common ancestor. Sometimes these digits have evolved and are reduced from the original five to a lower number, but there are never more than five fingers. Hippos have four toes on each hoof, making them even-toed. Tapirs have four toes on their front feet and three on their hind.



Front hand, paw and hoof positions

Place your hand in the following three positions. Notice how your thumb doesn't touch the ground, just like a cat or dog in the digitigrade position.

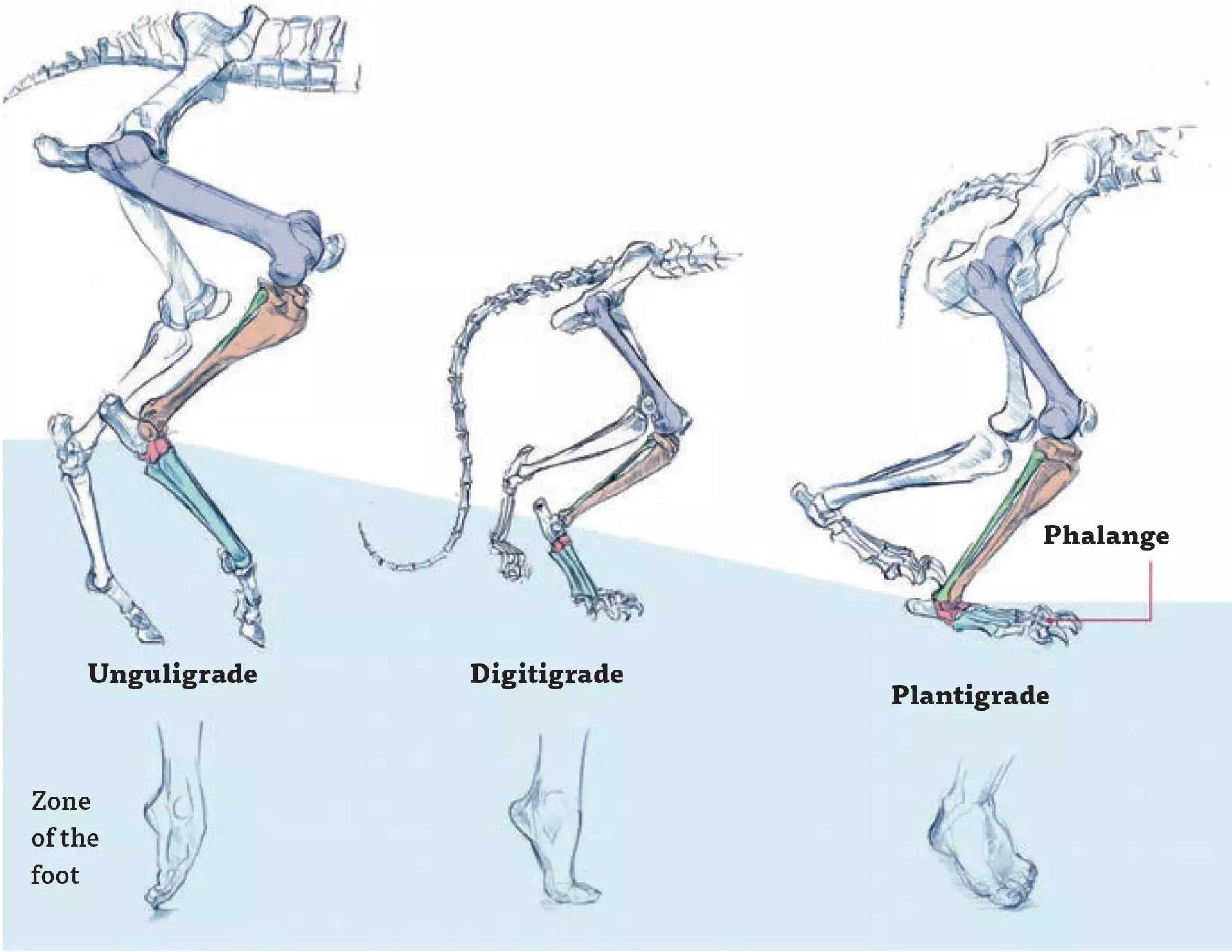
- 🟧 Scapula
- 🟩 Humerus
- 🟪 Radius
- 🟨 Ulna
- 🟥 Carpal
- 🟦 Metacarpal


Unguligrade
Digitigrade
Plantigrade
Zone of the hand or front paw or hoof

Foot and hind leg positions

Imagine that you are each class of animal by placing your foot in the following three positions.

- 🟪 Femur
- 🟩 Fibula
- 🟧 Tibia
- 🟥 Tarsal
- 🟦 Metatarsal

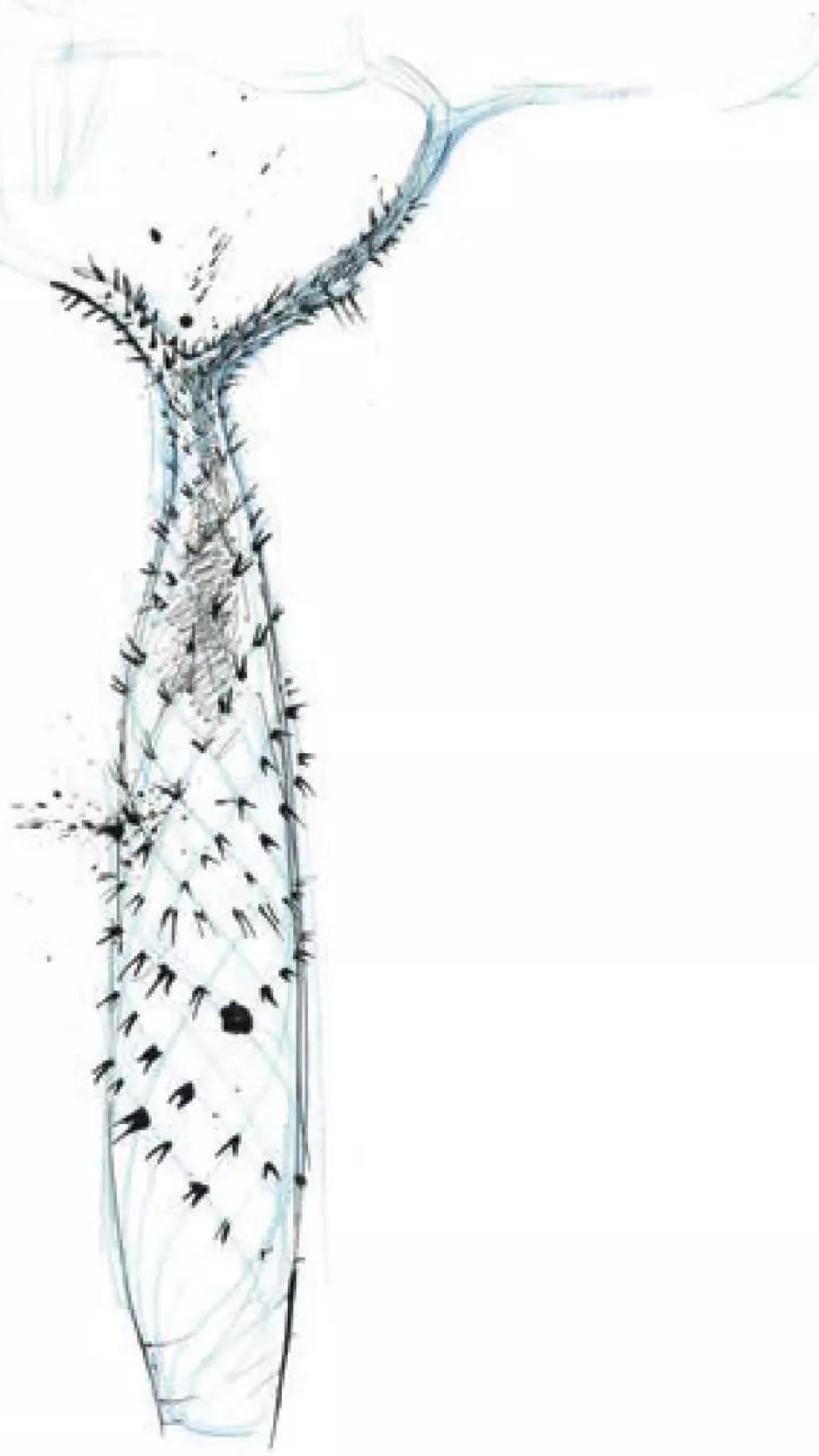

Phalange
Unguligrade
Digitigrade
Plantigrade
Zone of the foot

Shape essentials

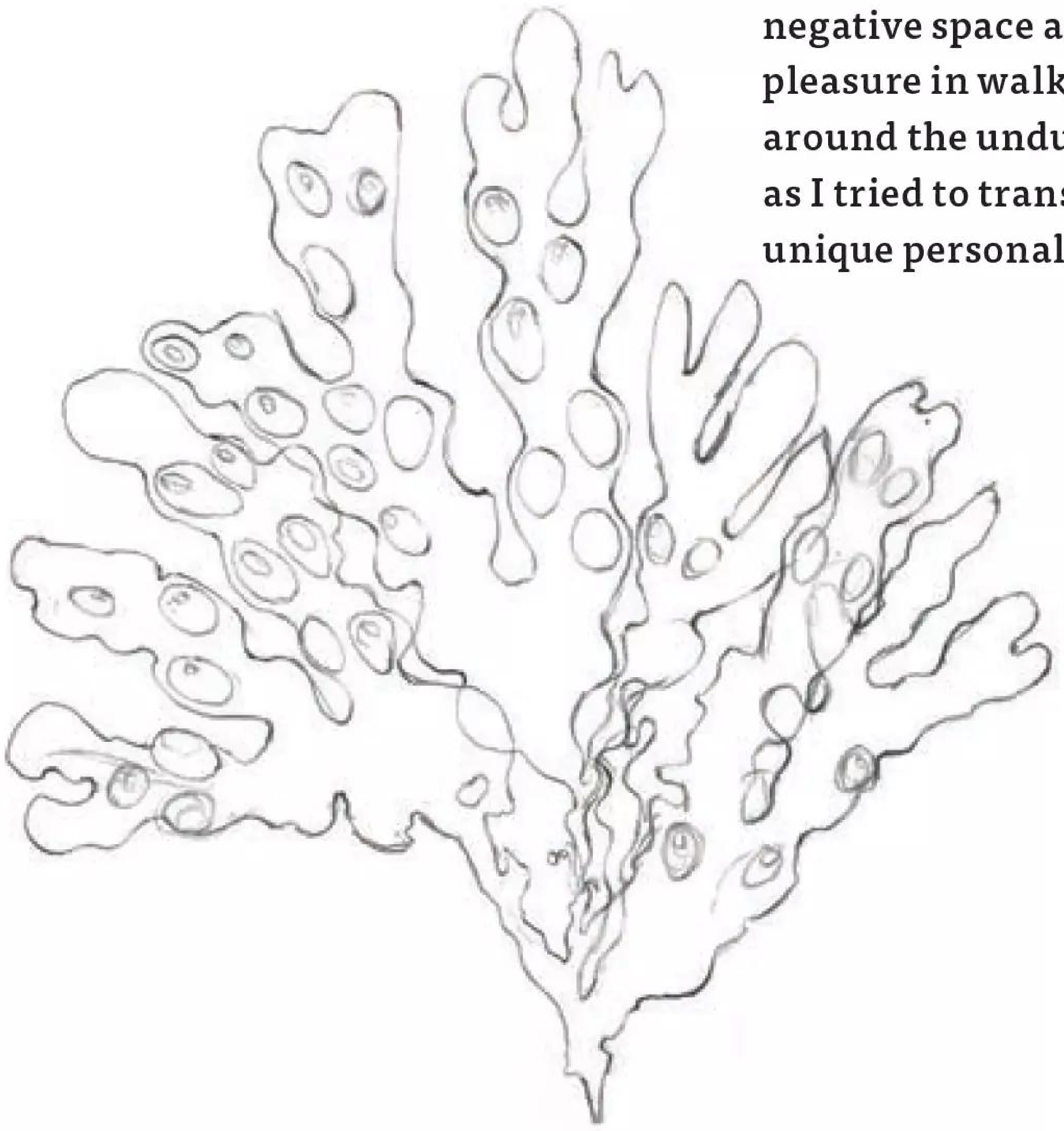
An important initial stage of any drawing is to become acquainted with the character of the two-dimensional, flat shapes that make up your subject. Capturing these shapes is key to expressing the personality of any subject in the natural world.

ORGANIC SHAPES

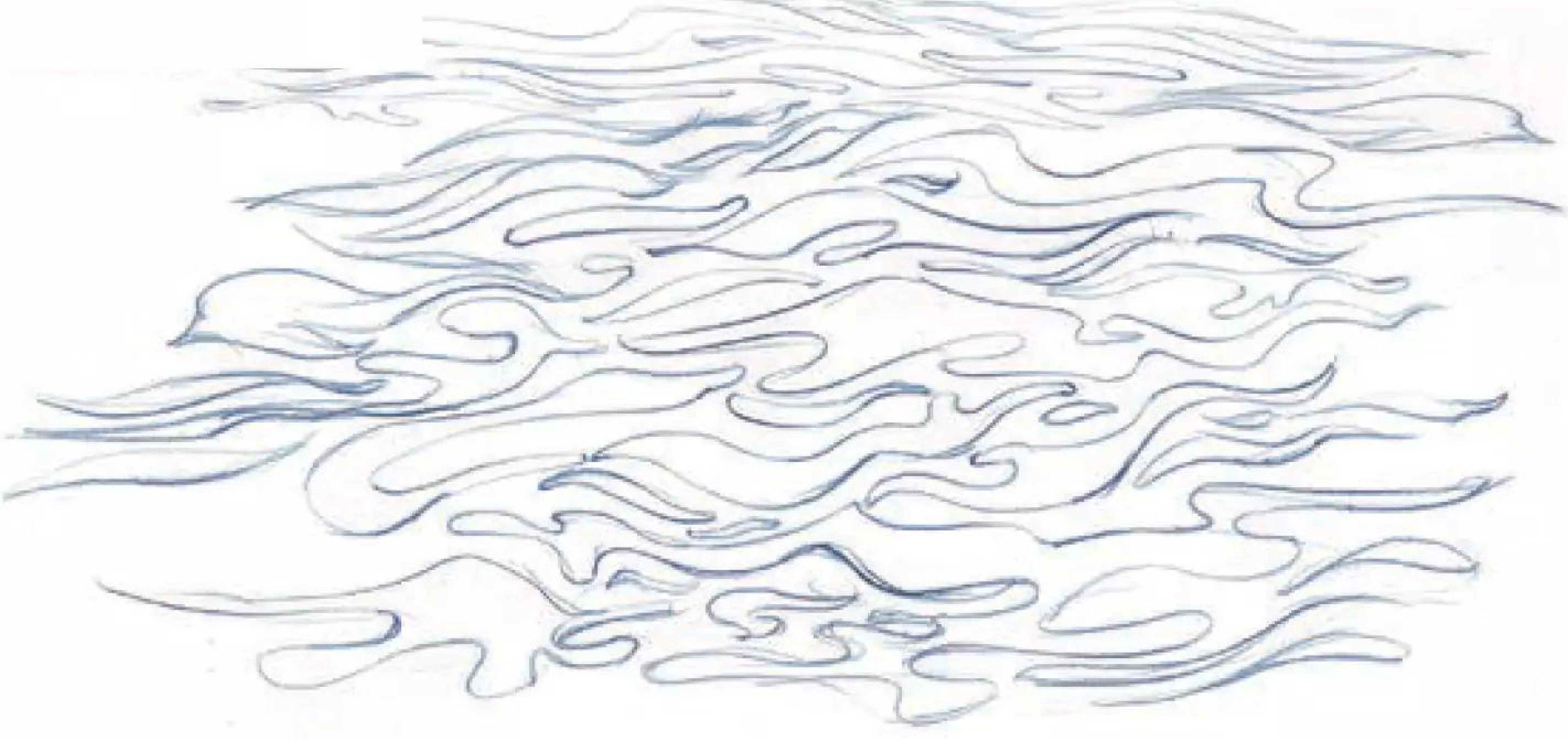
Irregular, organic shapes come in a vast variety of guises, so try to develop a feeling for many different types, from hard and sharp flint to the softest ostrich feather. Careful observation of shape will help you capture the character of your subject. Touch the subject if you can to know it better. Their shapes can appear erratic, but artists should enjoy and capture these imperfections. Naturally, these shapes will differ slightly from one another even when they are repeated.



Fearsome spikes
To capture the sharpness of cactus spines, I regularly sharpen my pencil to help me depict the tips with a flick mark.



Negative shapes
I created this drawing of bladderwrack by looking at the negative space as the positive. I found pleasure in walking the pencil tip around the undulating wobbly shapes as I tried to transfer this seaweed's unique personality to the page.



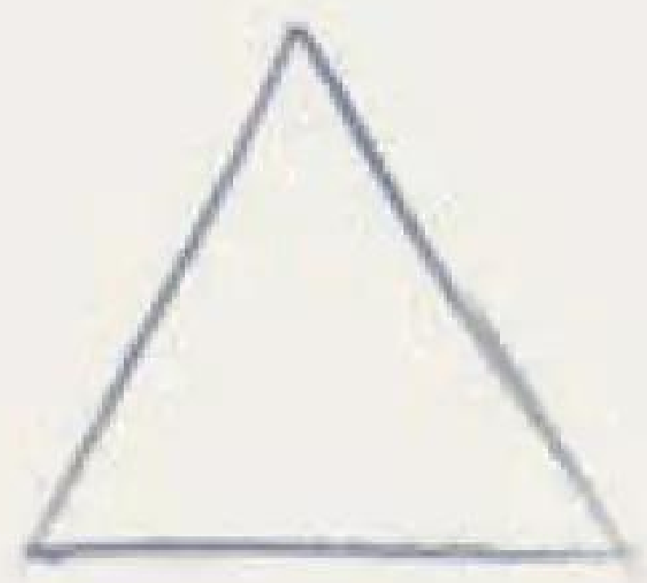
Abstract patterns in nature
Interlocking abstract liquid shapes of water ripples can be sketched with fluid curvilinear shapes that get closer together and smaller towards the horizon. Move your drawing implement by feeling the rhythm of the gently rocking water.

GEOMETRIC SHAPES

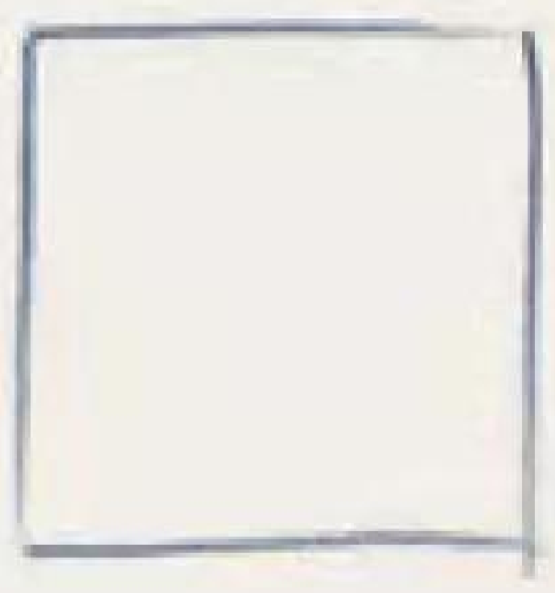
Geometric shapes come in a myriad of proportions. They can have numerous sides and corners and range from triangles, squares, rectangles, pentagons, hexagons, octagons, stars, snowflakes and so forth or can be completely round, such as circles and ellipses. These simplistic primary shapes are easy to understand. They can help construct both more complex geometric and organic shapes as well as forms.

SIMPLE GEOMETRIC SHAPES

Circles and ellipses
Having no beginning or end, these shapes are associated with a sense of eternity. Planets are circular and the universe is elliptical. Because circles lack angles, they are softer. Circles and ellipses can be used as the building blocks of drawing many natural forms.



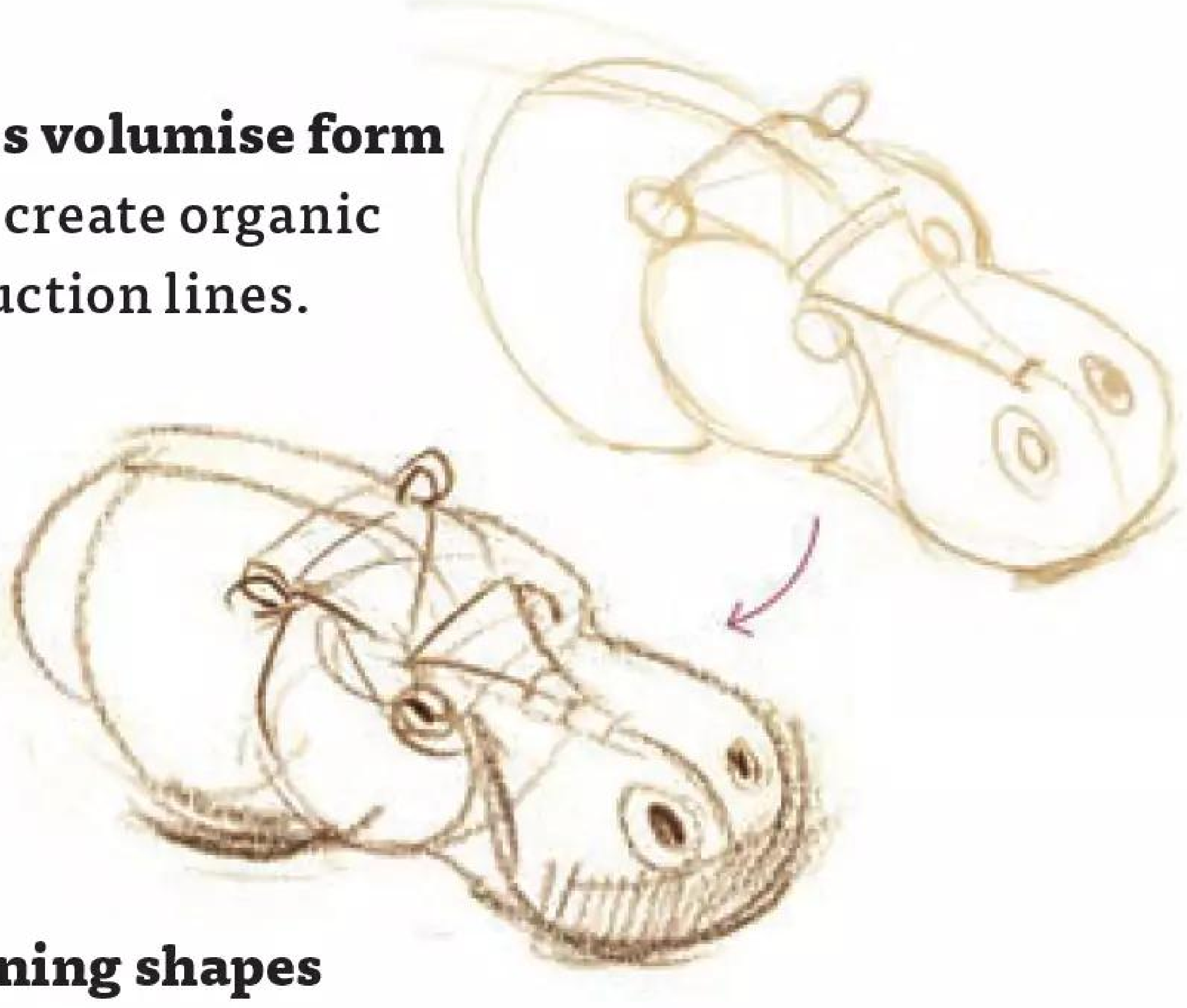
Triangles
Angular triangles create dynamic shapes that can create the impression of movement. An upright triangle represents stability and balance and is often used in composition. In contrast, an upside-down triangle creates a feeling of instability.



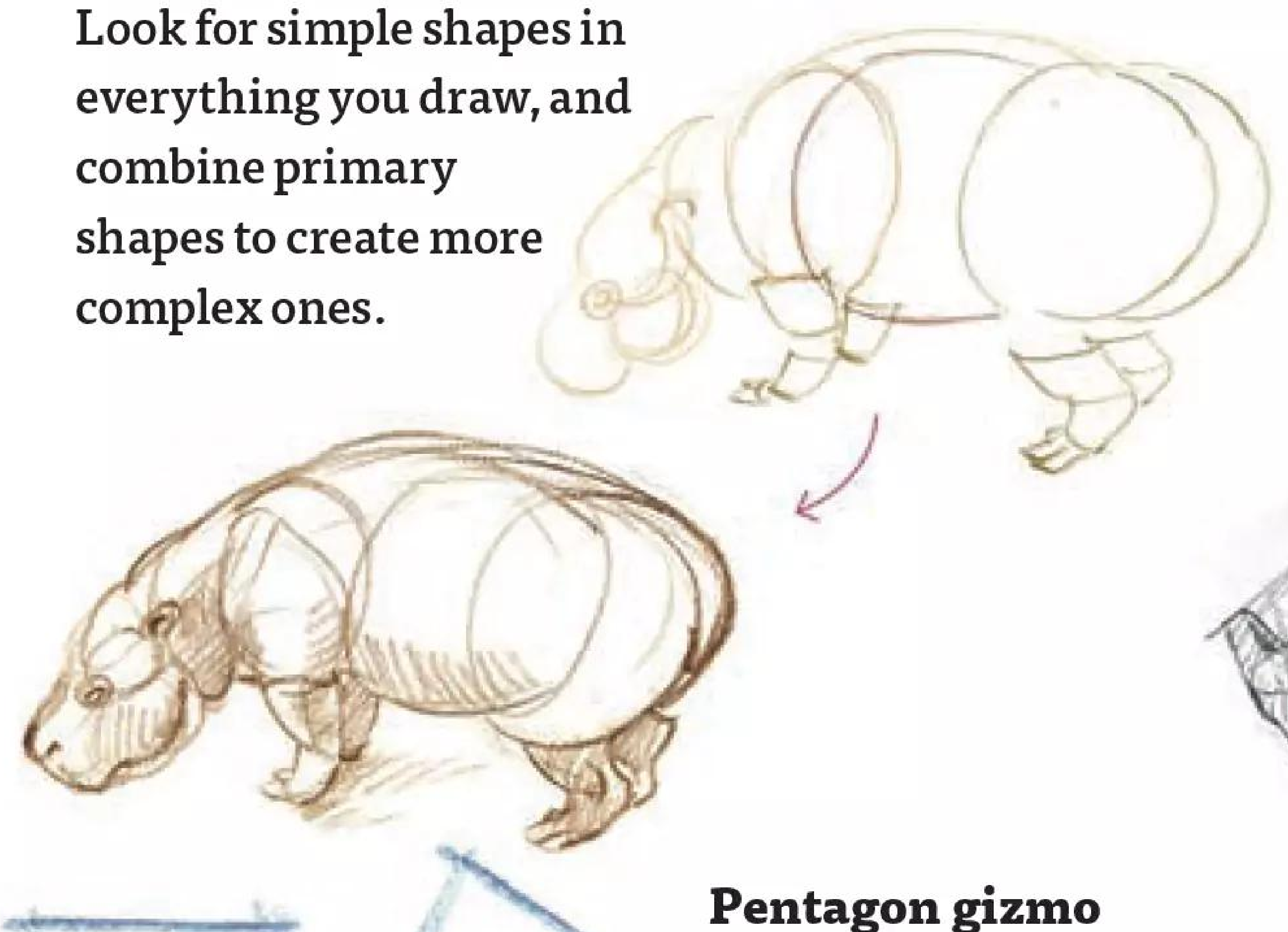
Squares
Squares and rectangles evoke feelings of trust, stability and authority. Divided into a symmetrical half, they become a valuable construction shape.

Polygons
Polygons are less common in nature but can dazzle the eye. Hexagonal cells in a beehive enable bees to efficiently use space using little wax.

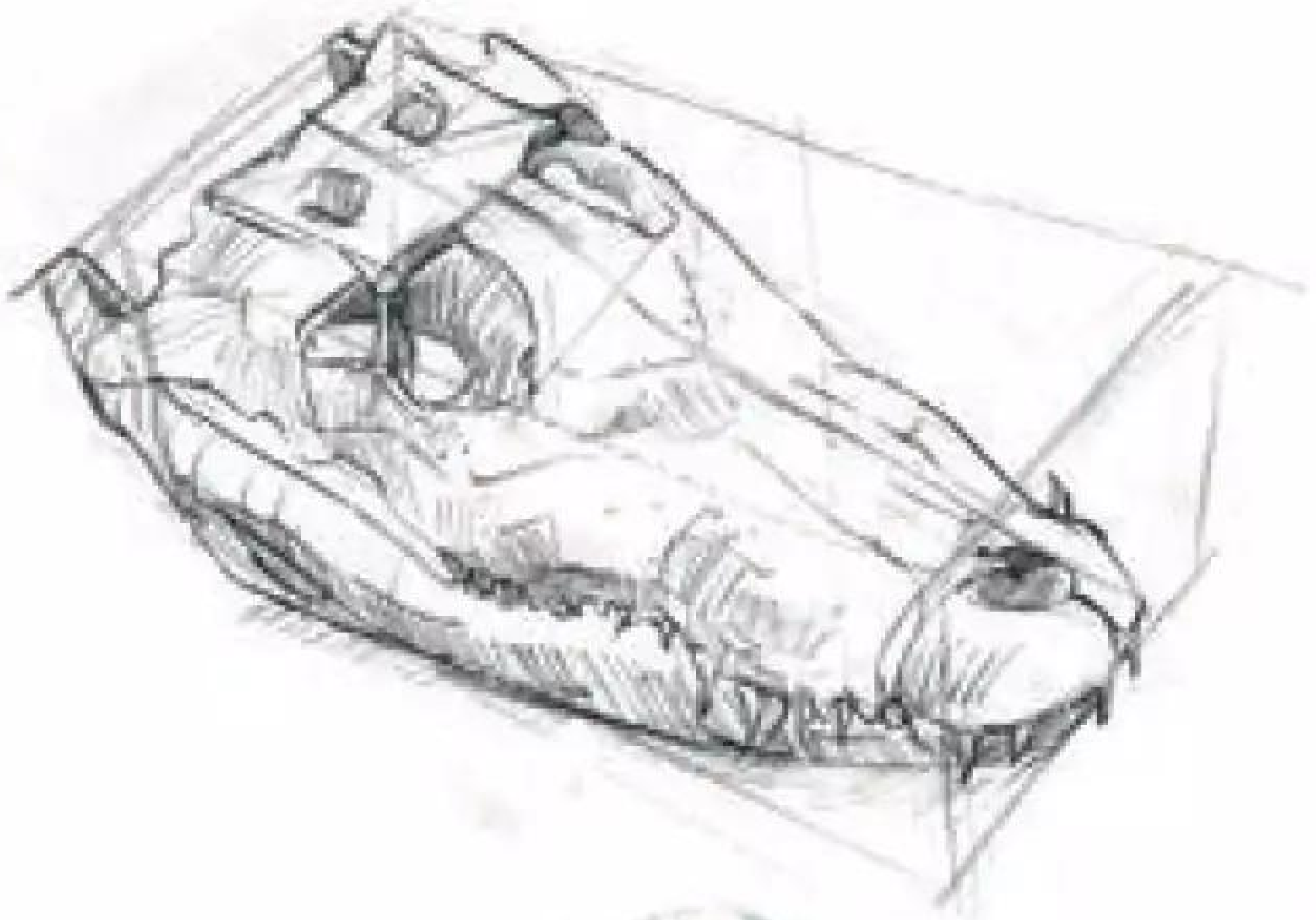
SHAPES IN ACTION



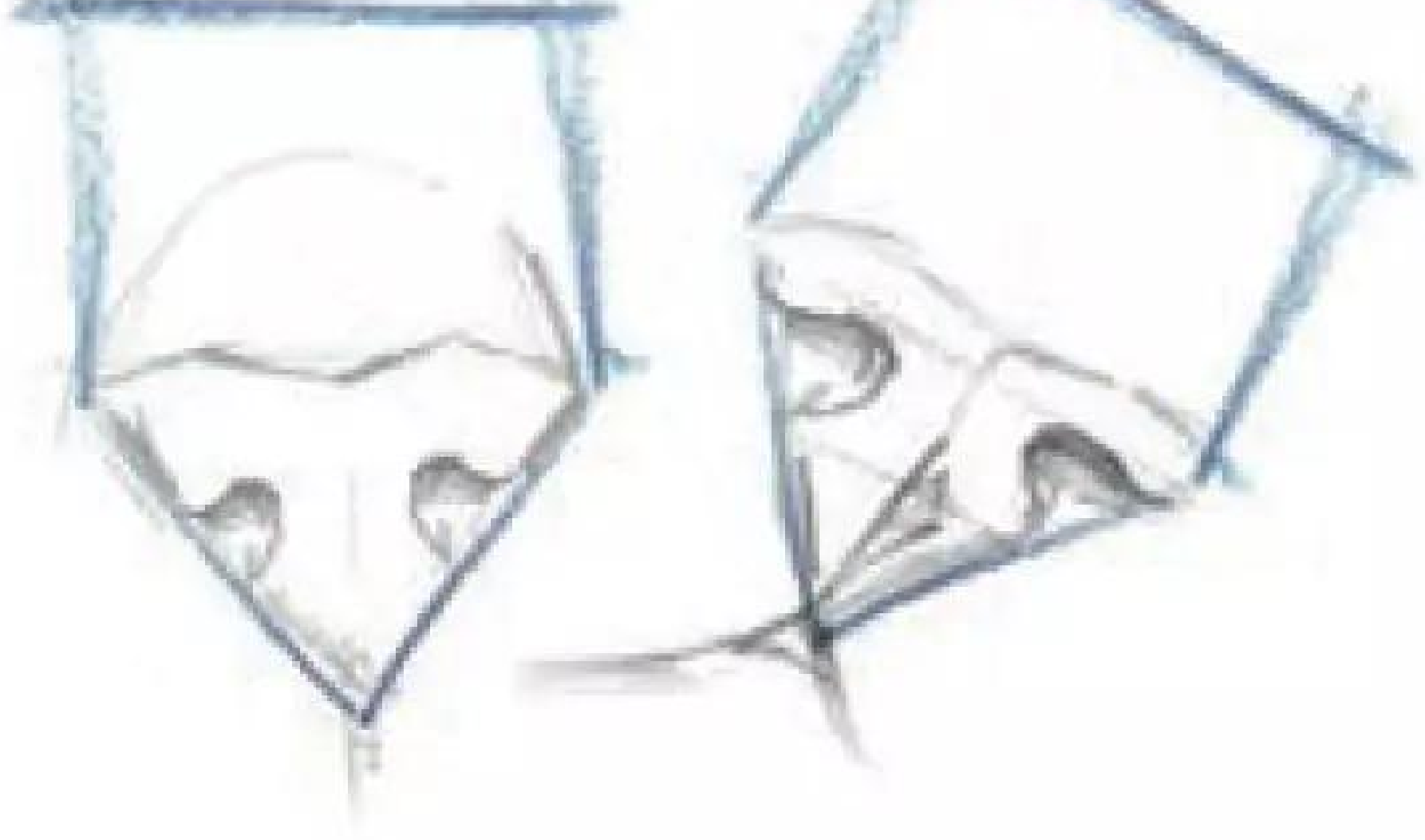
Ellipses volumise form
Circles create organic construction lines.



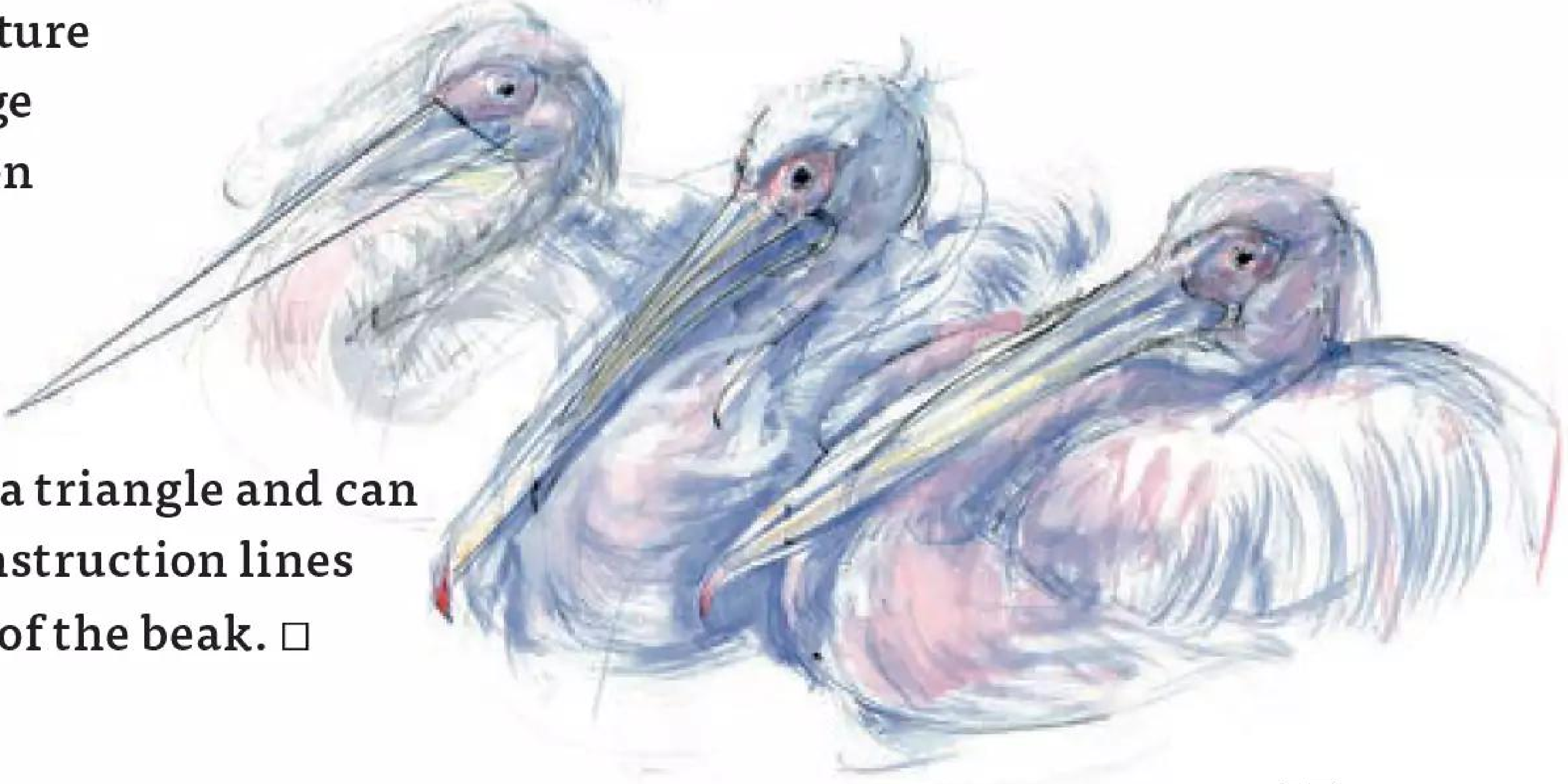
Combining shapes
Look for simple shapes in everything you draw, and combine primary shapes to create more complex ones.



Construction frames
Explore cubic box frames to make your drawings look three-dimensional.



Pentagon gizmo
A distorted pentagon can be used to structure a cat's nose and judge the distance between the eyes.



Dynamic shapes
The converging lines draw the eye to the tip of a triangle and can move it through a composition. Triangular construction lines are useful in calculating the length and width of the beak. □

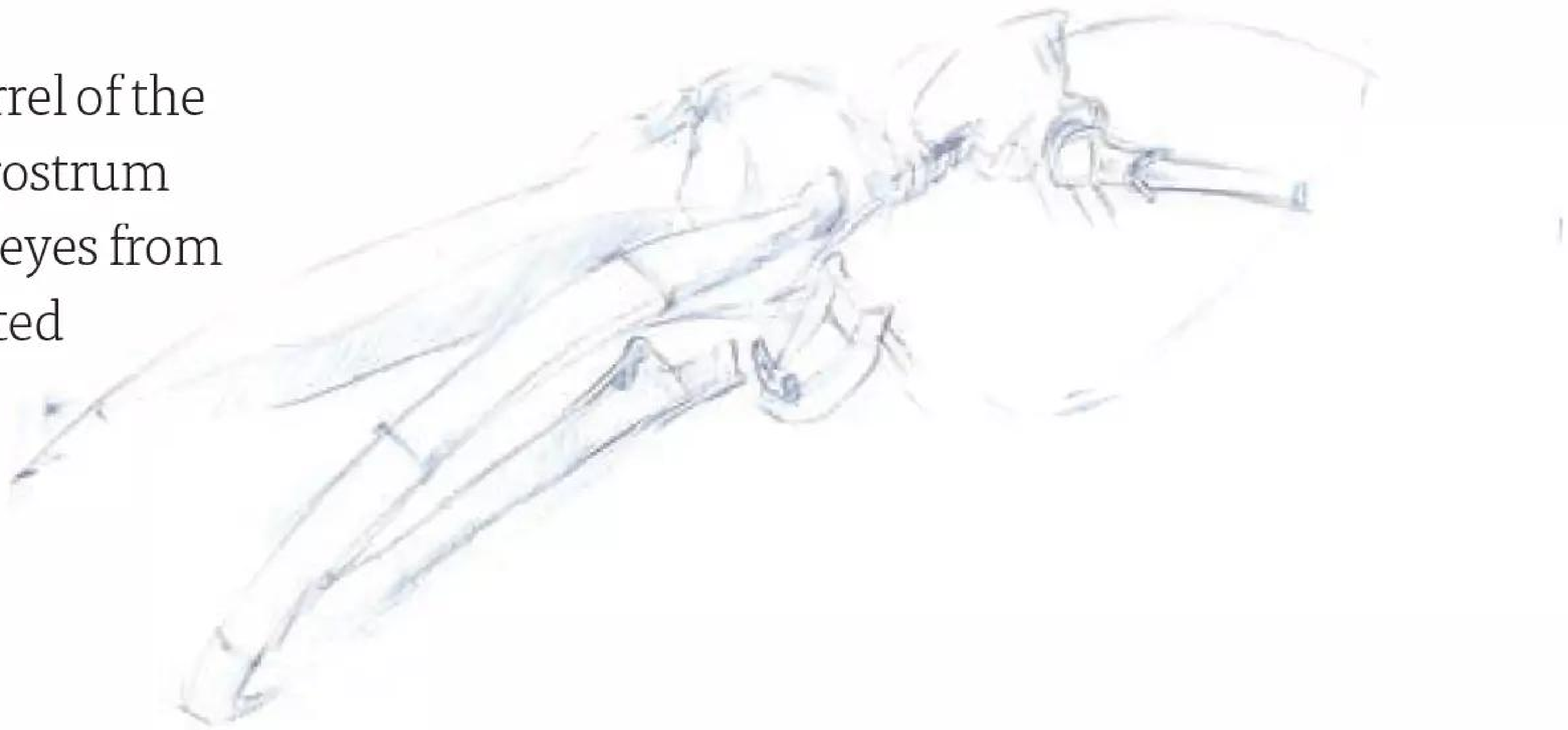
Drawing giant animals

Sketching giant animals is all about scale. Being close to these two giants during a museum visit, I chose a sight-sized approach for both the blue whale and the moa (opposite). Careful planning at the initial plotting-out stage is key to ensure toes and tails can fit on the page. The skeletons themselves will really introduce the mechanics of the animal to an artist. Be on the lookout for unusual angles that can challenge your sketching skills and introduce you to new ways of looking at a familiar subject.

Natural history museums often suspend cetacean skeletons from the ceiling, which you can sit beneath to capture dramatic diving poses. Held like a puppet on a string, a rod is placed beneath the central vertebral column that acts like an armature for all the other bones.

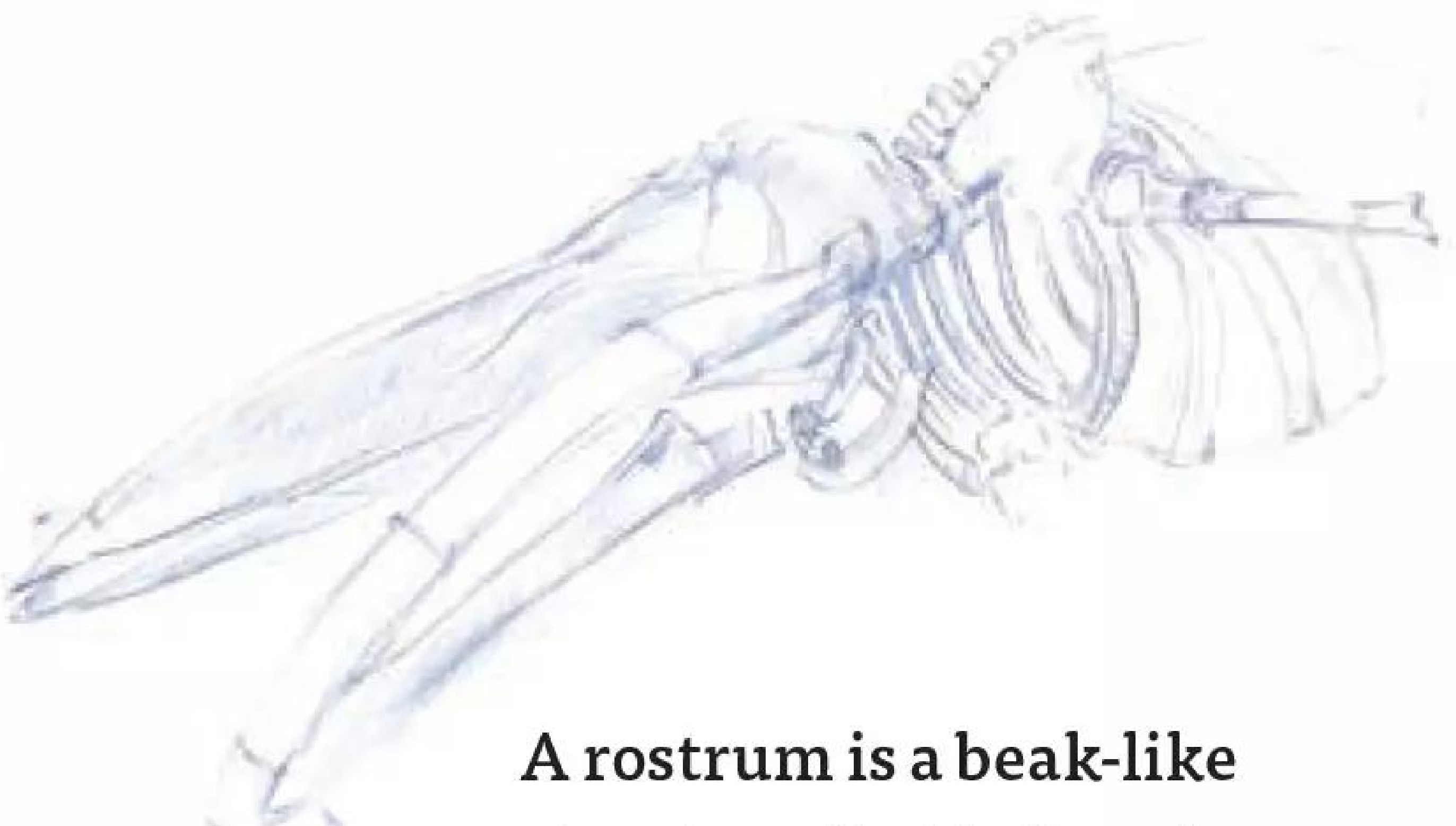
BLUE WHALE SKELETON

In this foreshortened view, the massive barrel of the chest is dramatically compressed and the rostrum appears elongated. I frequently flicked my eyes from viewing the subject to the page as I attempted to tackle the whale's structural make-up, taking lots of sight-sized measurements.



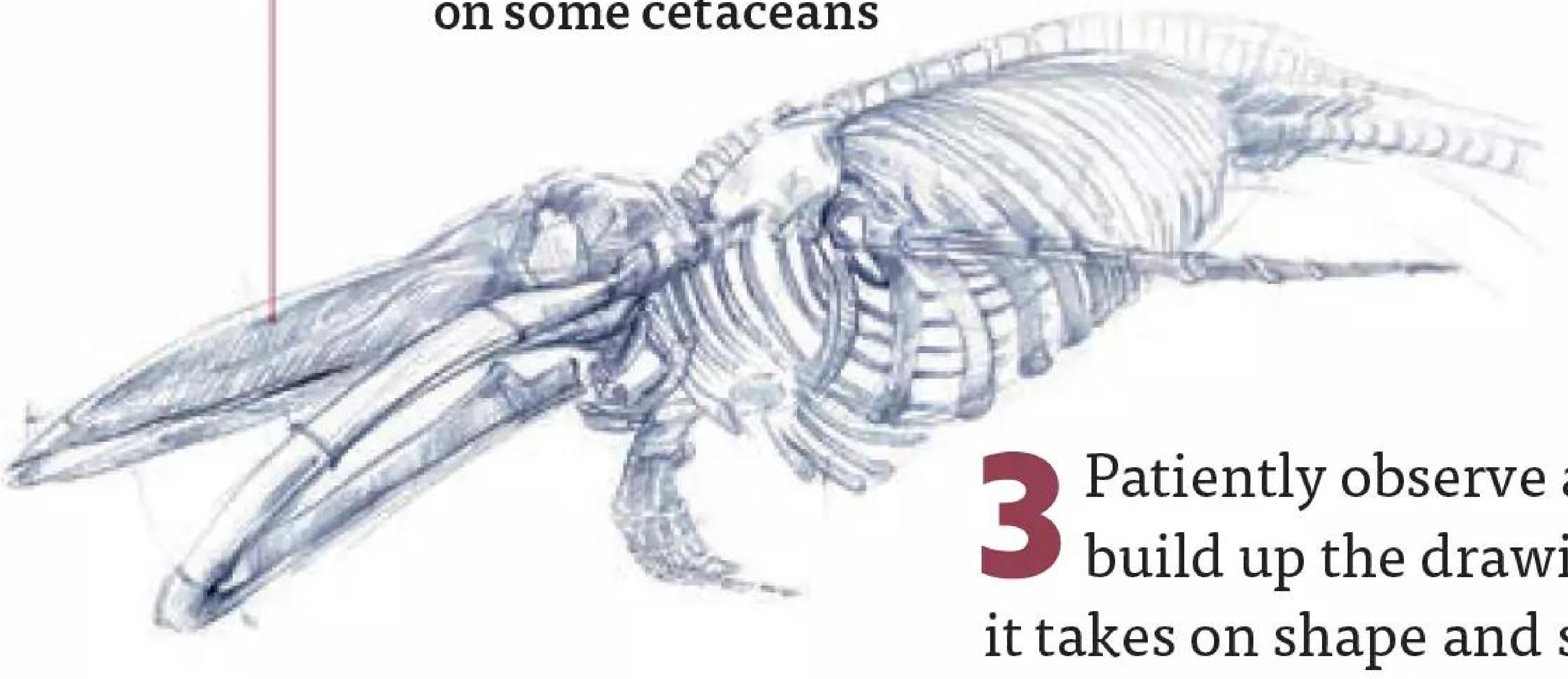
Blue whale
(Balaenoptera musculus)
The blue whale, which can weigh hundreds of tons, is the largest animal ever to live on earth and survives almost entirely on a diet of one of the smallest, krill. The skeleton I sketched is at the Natural History Museum in London.

1 Sit on a sketching stool beneath the suspended skeleton, where you will have a dynamic viewpoint. Begin your sketch lightly as you search for the character and proportions by looking at both negative and positive shapes. Try to get an understanding of one area and let the drawing grow from there.



2 The soft, waxy quality of the colouring pencil allows for soft hatching marks. As you make them, purposefully angle them along the various planes of the bones.

A rostrum is a beak-like structure that is found on some cetaceans



3 Patiently observe and build up the drawing until it takes on shape and solidity.

MATERIALS
- Indigo artist's quality colouring pencil
- Large cartridge (drawing) paper or sketchbook
- Sharpener
- Putty eraser

MOA SKELETON

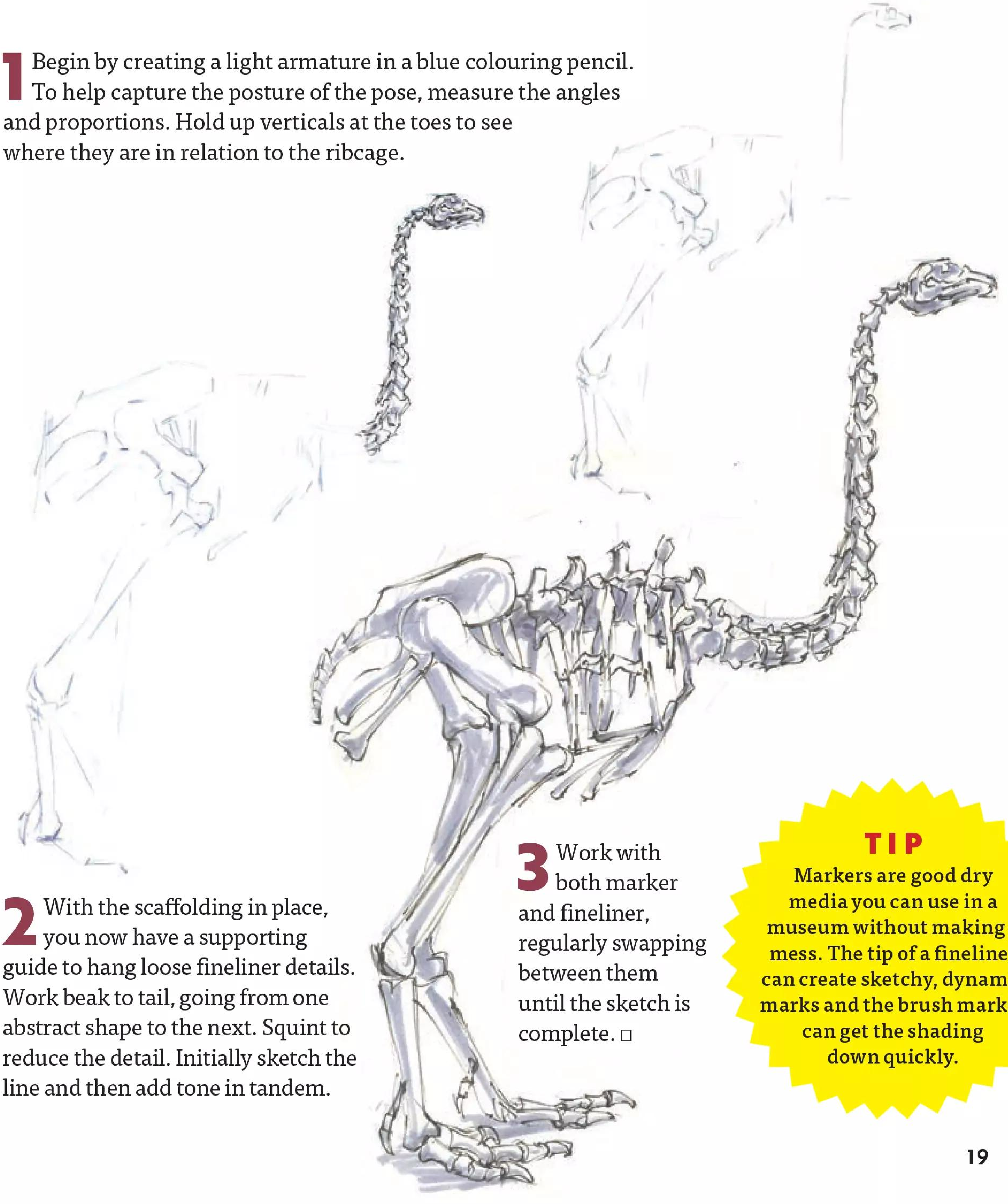
Although it is generally taught to work up all the parts of a drawing at the same time, for me this isn't the case. I have seen examples of some of the greatest draughtsmen, such as Rembrandt, completely finish an area of an etching while other areas appear virtually untouched.

Moa *(Dinornis robustus)*
Moa is an extinct group of nine species of flightless birds from New Zealand. The two largest species could grow over 12ft (3.5m) tall. This is a sketch of one of the largest Dinornis robustus residing at the Natural History Museum in London.

MATERIALS

- Indigo artist's quality colouring pencil
- Light grey brush marker
- Fibre-tip fineliner
- Large cartridge (drawing) paper or sketchbook
- Sharpener
- Putty eraser

1 Begin by creating a light armature in a blue colouring pencil. To help capture the posture of the pose, measure the angles and proportions. Hold up verticals at the toes to see where they are in relation to the ribcage.



2 With the scaffolding in place, you now have a supporting guide to hang loose fineliner details. Work beak to tail, going from one abstract shape to the next. Squint to reduce the detail. Initially sketch the line and then add tone in tandem.

3 Work with both marker and fineliner, regularly swapping between them until the sketch is complete. □

TIP

Markers are good dry media you can use in a museum without making a mess. The tip of a fineliner can create sketchy, dynamic marks and the brush marker can get the shading down quickly.

Animal portraits

Drawings of people are not the exclusive subjects of portraits. A portrait drawing is typically an artistic depiction of a face that focuses primarily on the subject's personality and expressions. The intention is to express the subject's likeness and personality.

There is a thrill in getting acquainted with a new species while drawing. Before you start sketching, consider the animal's habitat and habits, and how its anatomy may have adapted to these conditions. I always observe an animal subject for a while before making any mark on the page, watching how it moves and looking out for any habitual movements. When drawing a live animal, I quickly switch from one sketch to the next, starting and stopping every time the animal moves, to make a study sheet. For this exercise, I made a study sheet of a sleepy fennec fox, although a cat, dog, rabbit and other pet will easily suffice as a subject.

Trying to capture moving or dozing animals from life will help bring the drawings to life, making the animals appear alive on paper. Wild animals are not likely to sit for a portrait!

Fennec fox
(Vulpes zerda)
Few are as engaging as the fennec fox, with its enormous ears. They are used to vent heat and listen for underground prey in their African desert habitat. These foxes, which are members are the smallest foxes in the world. They have distinctive triangular faces, almond-shaped eyes and delicate snouts.

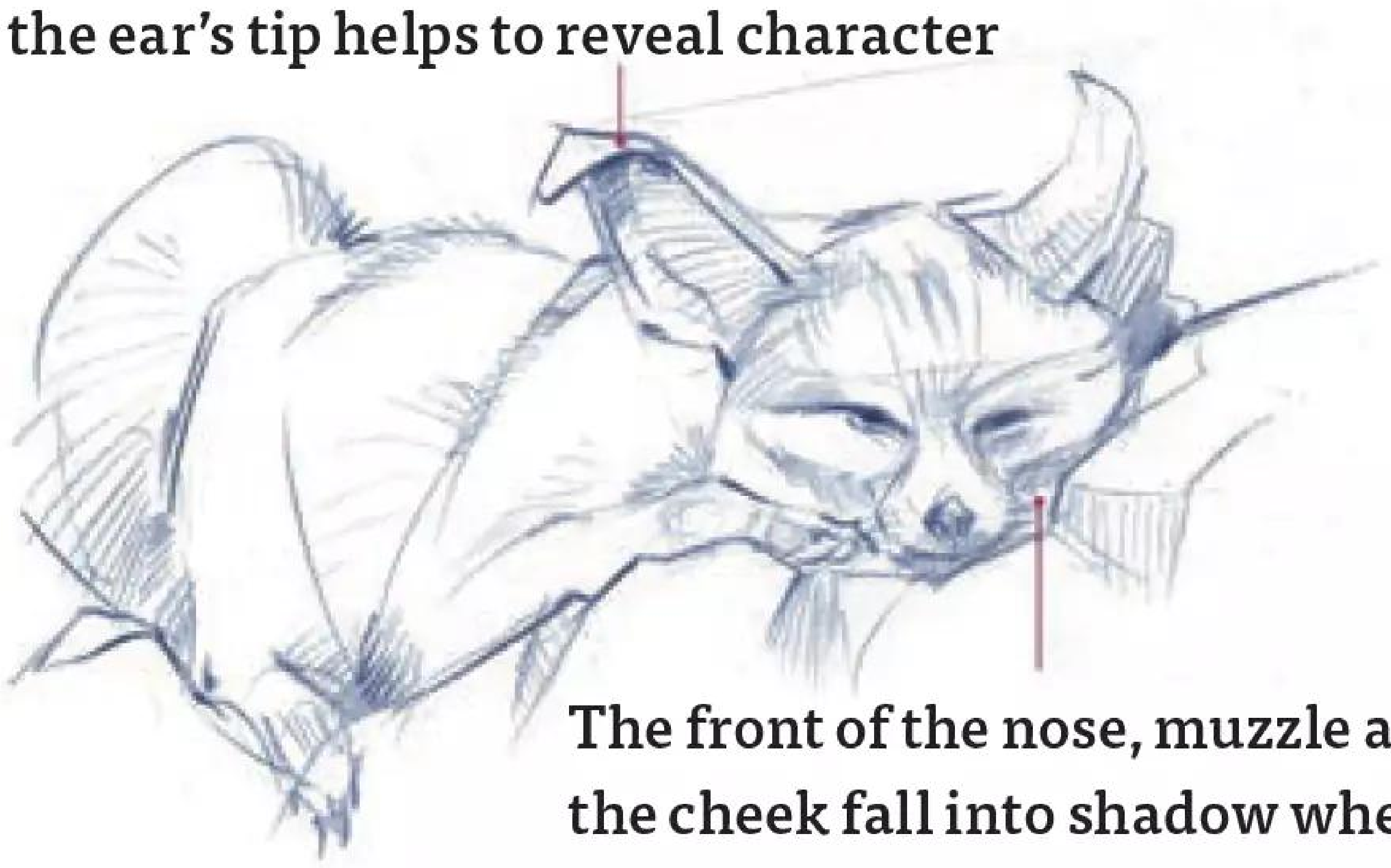
MATERIALS

- Prussian Blue artist's quality colouring pencil
- Cartridge (drawing) paper or sketchbook
- Sharpener
- Putty eraser

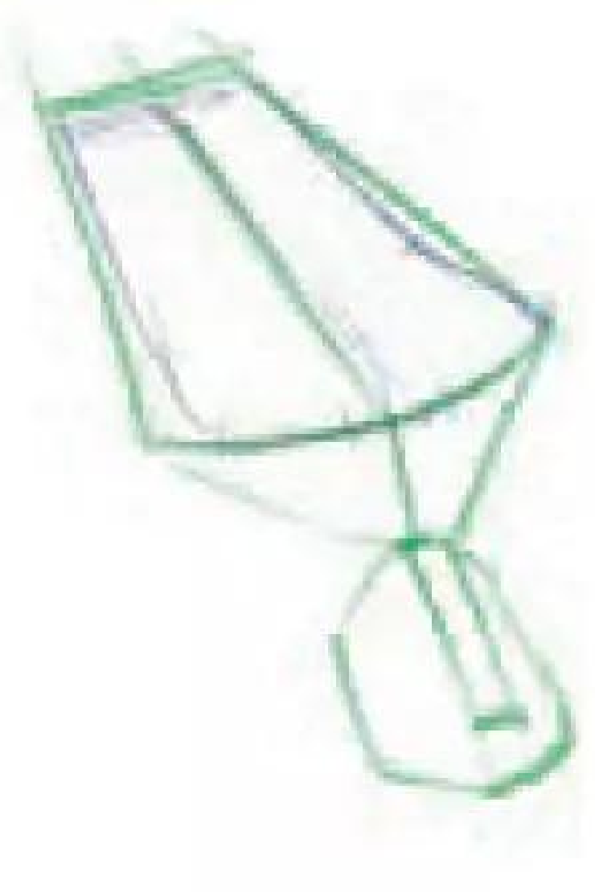
FENNEC FOX

Canids are a group of animals that come in a great variety of shapes and sizes, from the long-legged maned wolf to the short-legged sausage dog. Each species is distinct in shape and size, either through natural or human-made selection that results in specific characteristics. Amongst these are the individual personalities that you will really get a sense of when spending time with them.

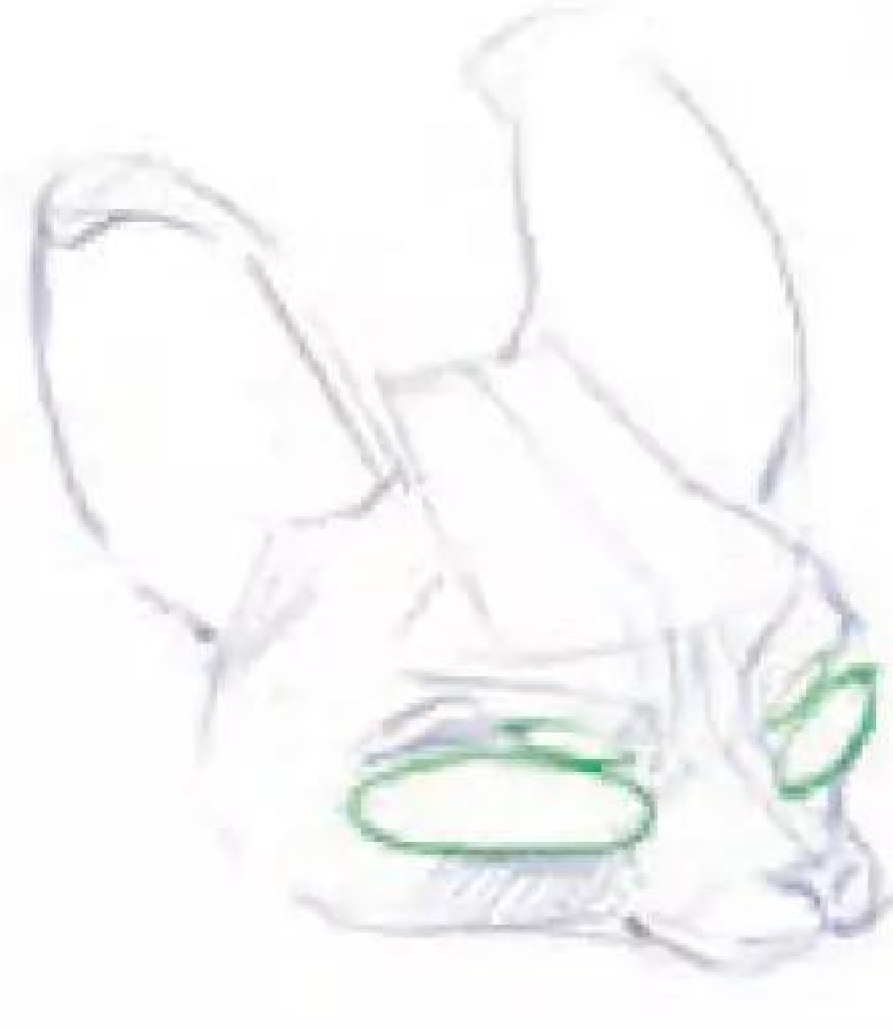
Capturing the slight lopeared droop of the ear's tip helps to reveal character



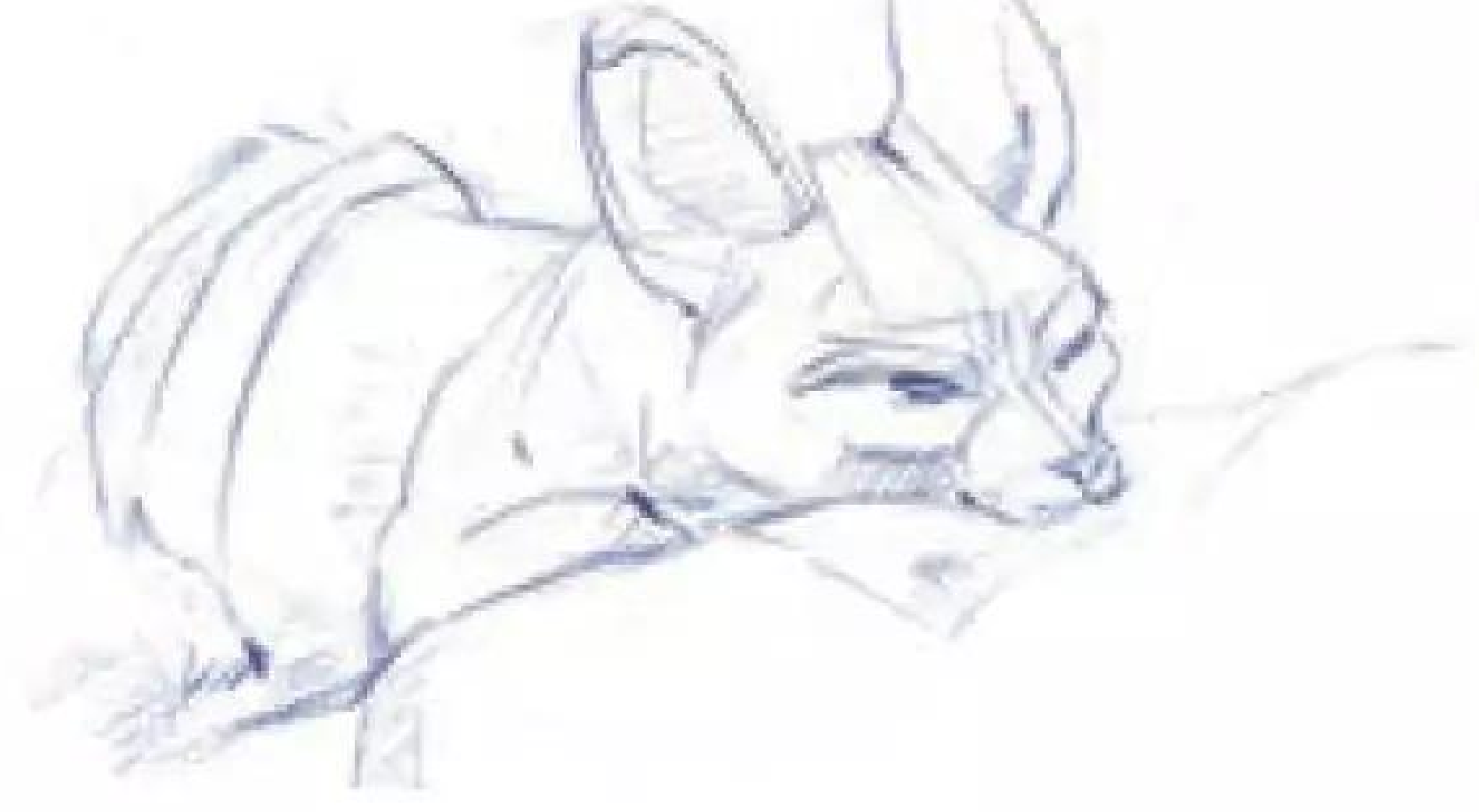
The front of the nose, muzzle and beneath the cheek fall into shadow when the light source is typically from above



1 Begin by creating the shape of the animal's forehead and establishing a line of symmetry. Make a triangular shape where the eyes will fit.



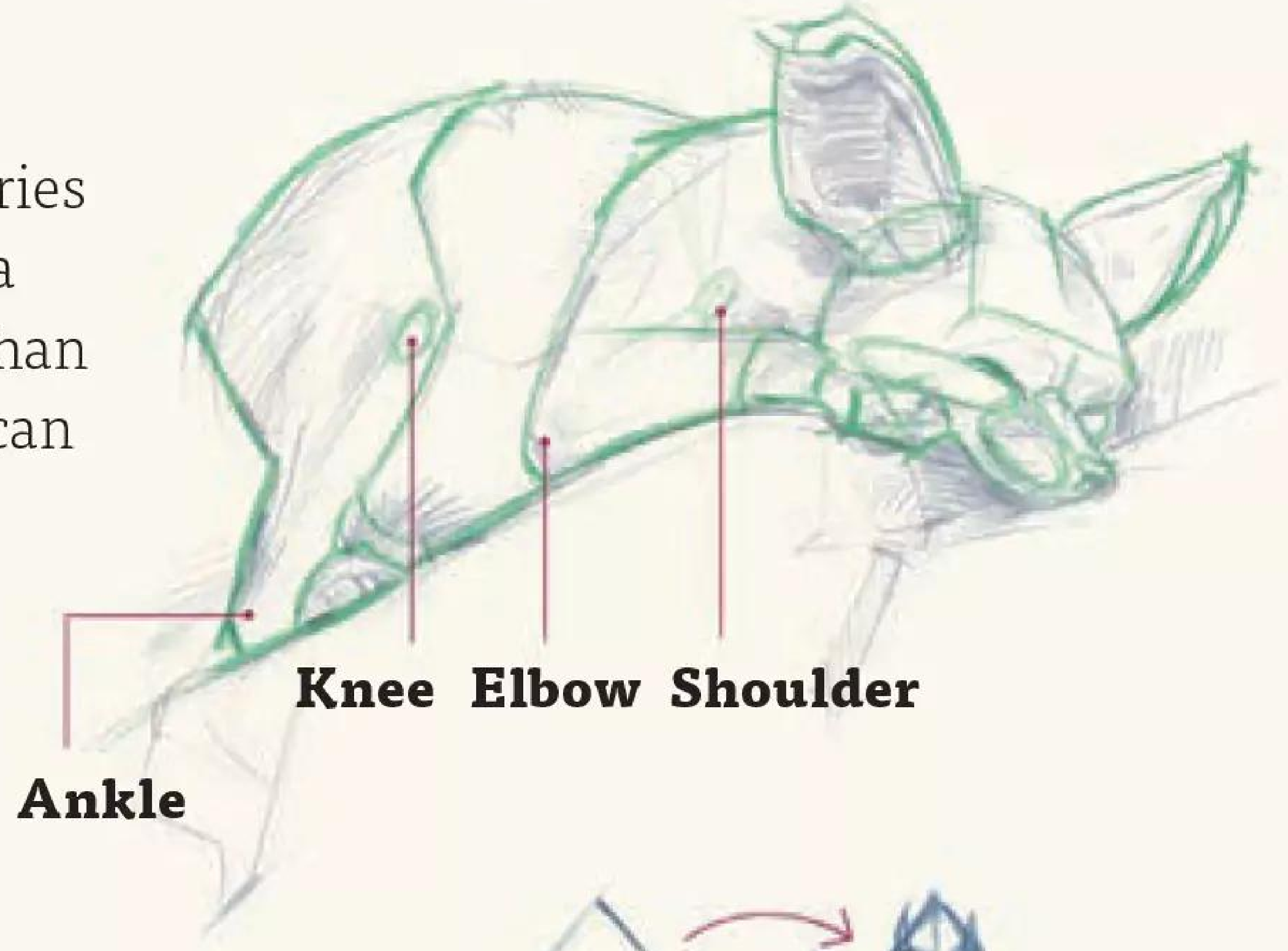
2 Make smooth ellipsis shapes to faintly create ghost lines of the cheeks and eyes. Sketch in the nostrils with a slit at the side, which enables exhaled air to come out of the side so that the fox can sniff fresh air.



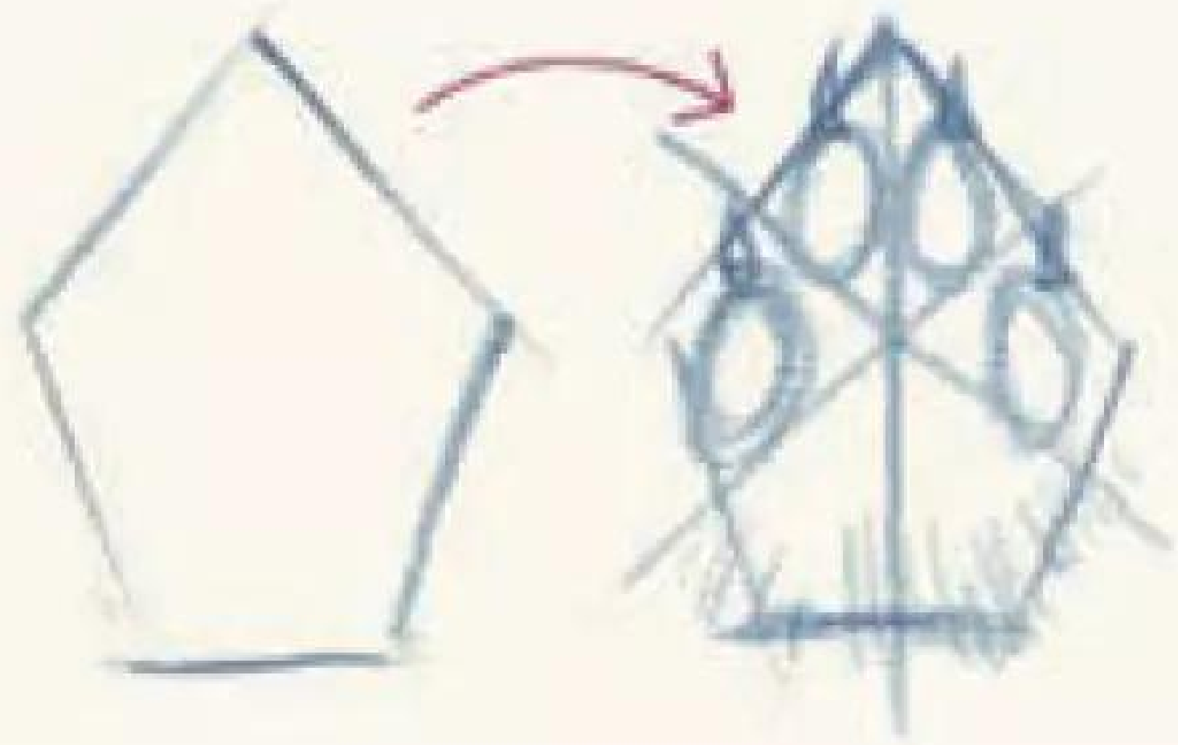
3 Finally, create shading with hatching, following the form and fur. Make lines that intentionally overlap to convey that one form is in front of the other: the head at the front, then the neck, torso and finally hindquarters. □

Study sheet: *Fennec fox*

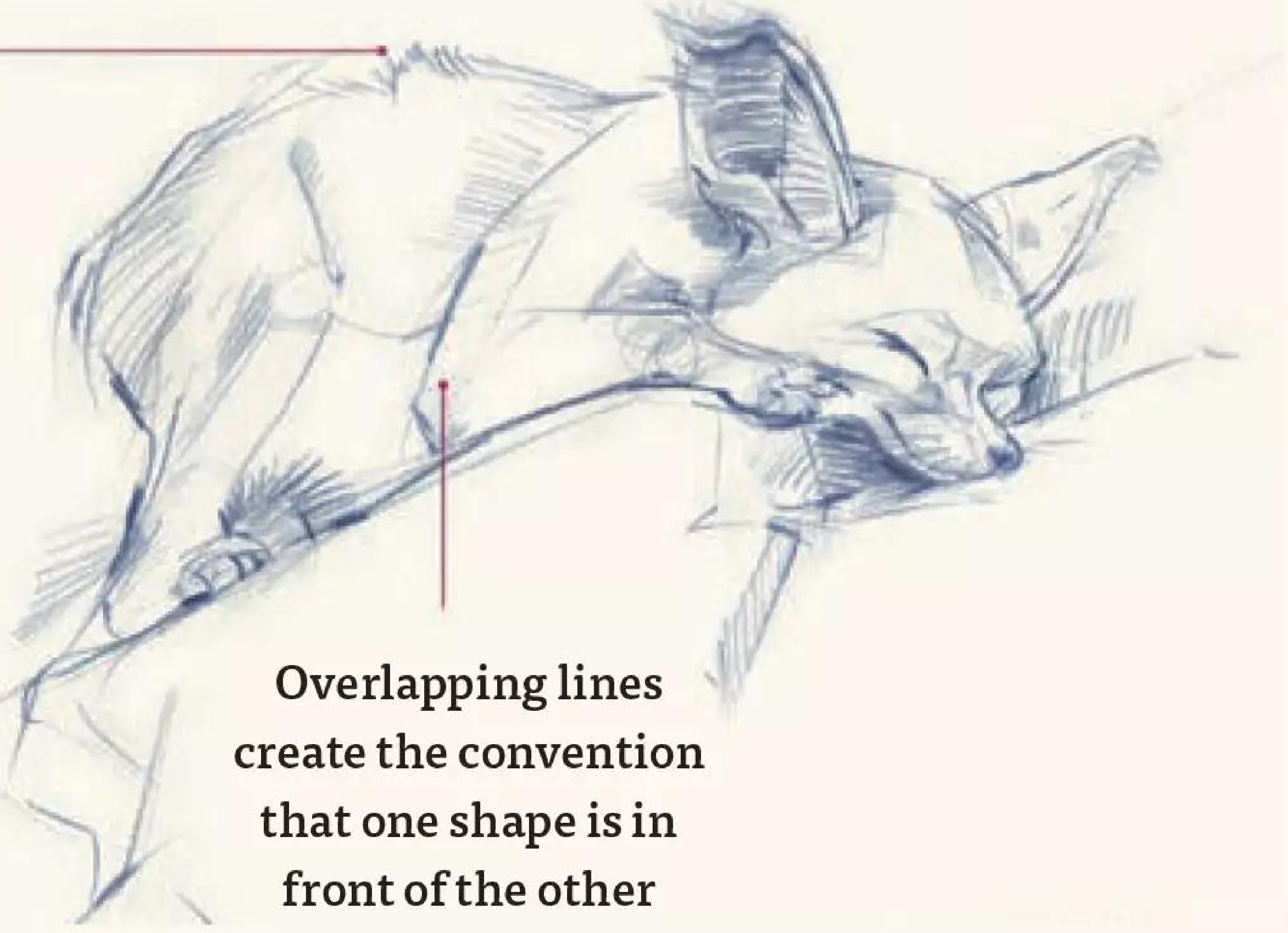
A sequence of study sheet sketches introduced me to the subject's distinctive shapes. By breaking the head into a series of simple abstract shapes – I prefer to think of a head with a three-dimensional cranium and protruding snout rather than a face with two-dimensional eyes, nose and mouth – they can be combined to create a representational drawing.



Finding personality
Starting with the head, sketch the cranium by making a lightly drawn box and connecting a box to it to house the projecting muzzle. Work shape to shape along the animal's body until you get to its tail. Constantly evaluate the angles of the limbs and body and their proportions in respect to those of the head. You can do this by holding up a horizontal and vertical and creating comparative measurements.

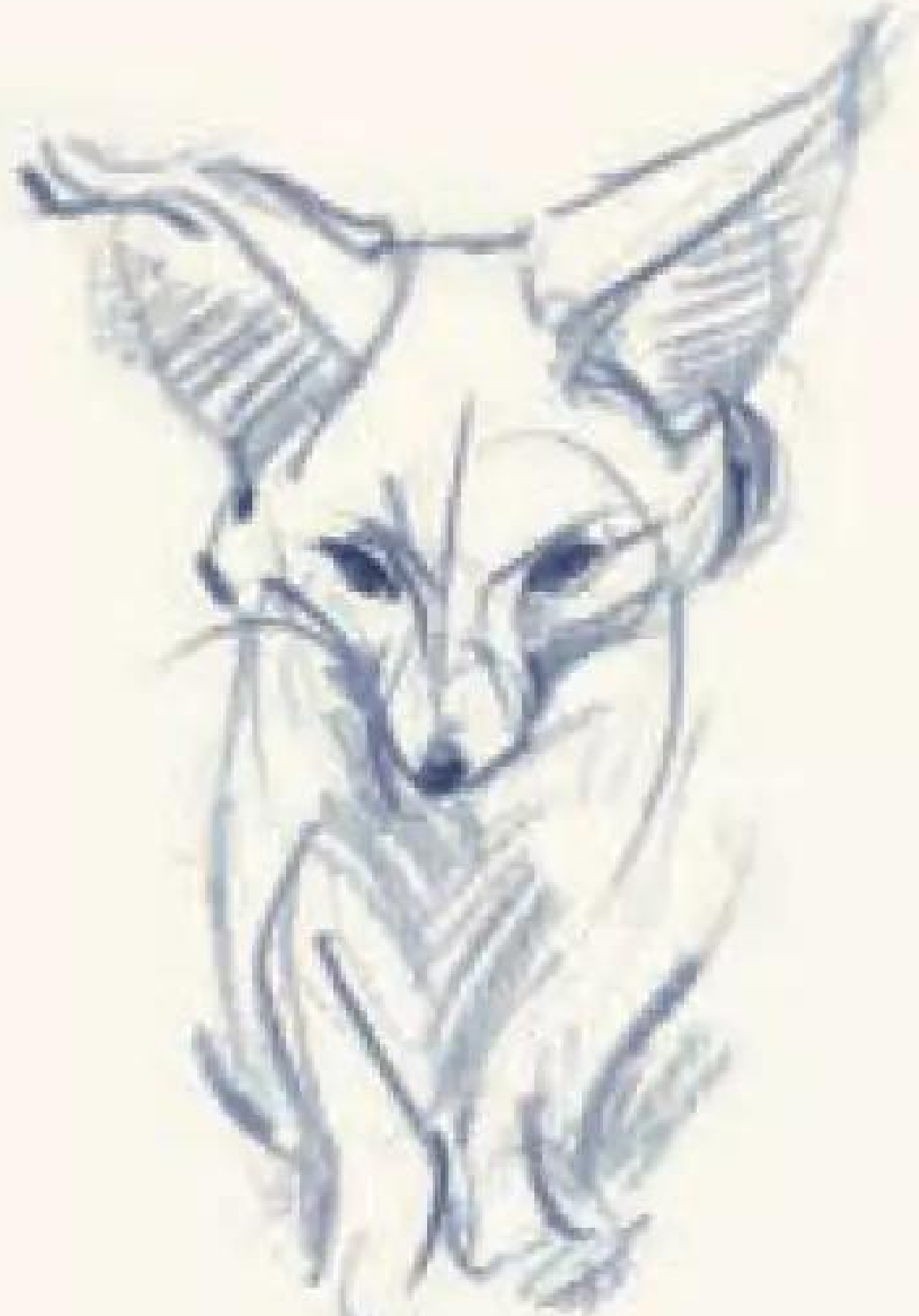


Foot gizmo
Draw a pentagon with a cross in the centre. The front two toes are in front of the back two.



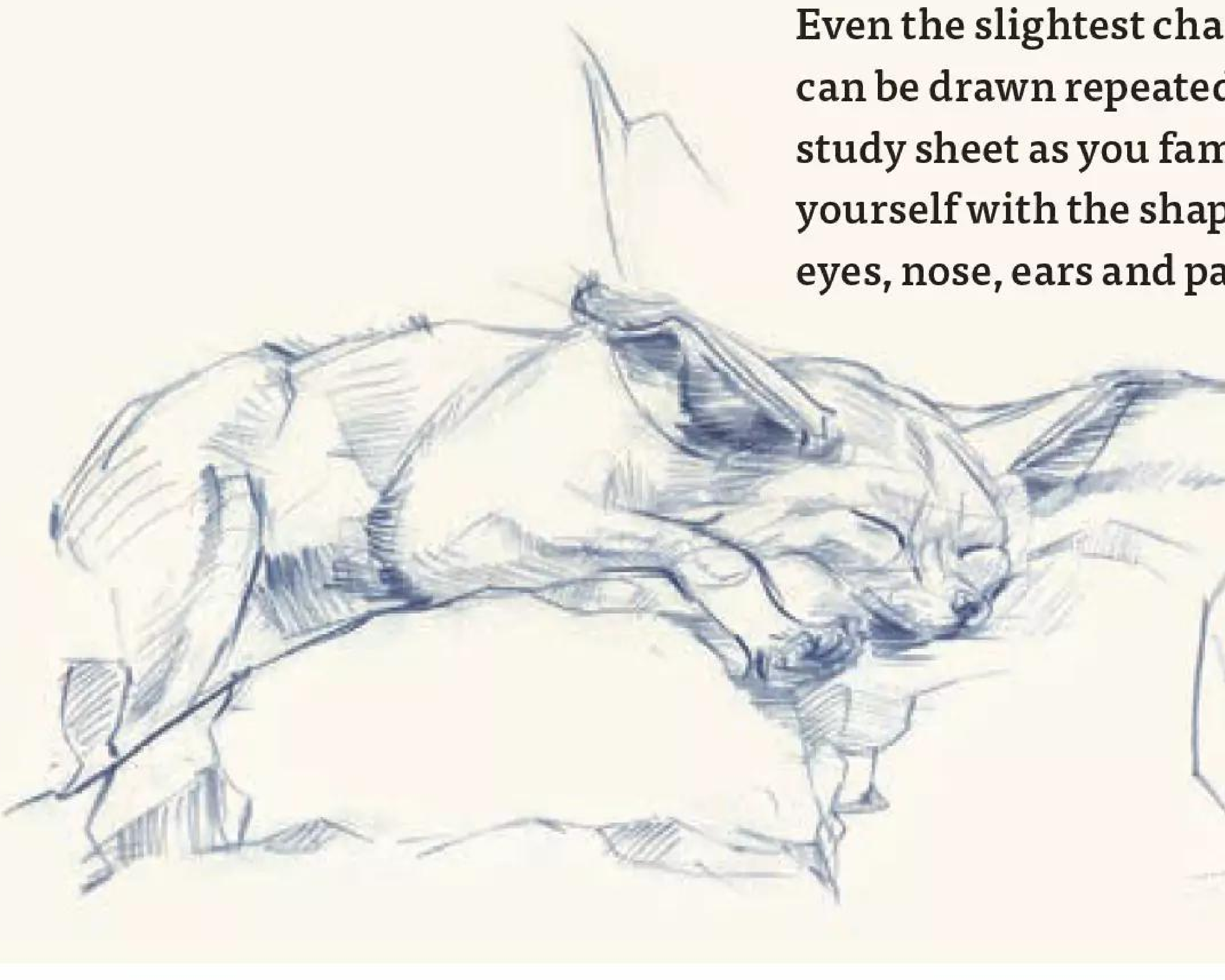
Hair marks, which are flick marks from the wrist, are intended to create an impression rather than each individual hair, which are finer than the tip of a pencil

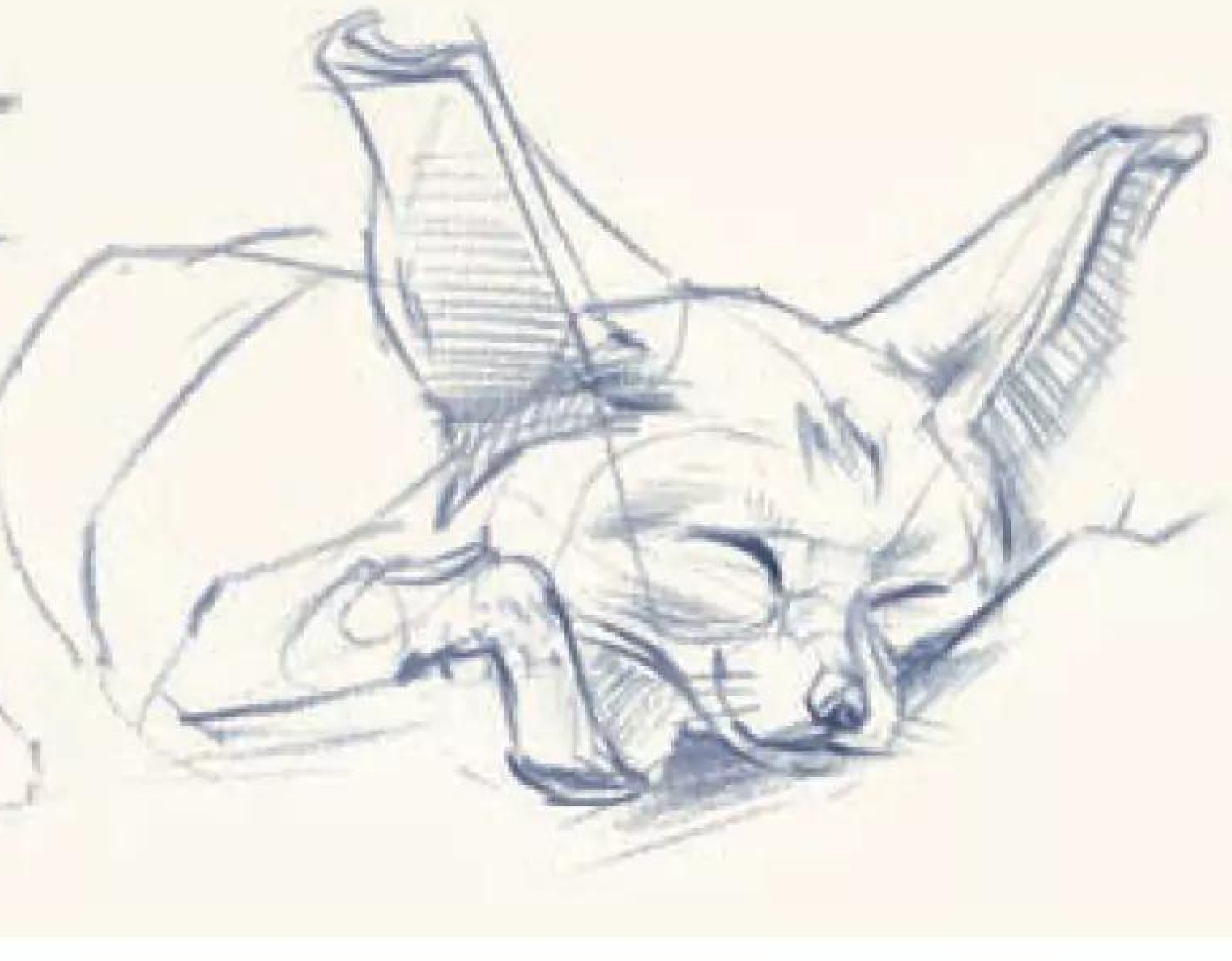
Overlapping lines create the convention that one shape is in front of the other



Warm-up
Quick warm-up exercises are helpful for acquainting you with the characterful shapes of the fennec fox. □

Familiarise yourself
Even the slightest change in pose can be drawn repeatedly in a study sheet as you familiarise yourself with the shapes of the eyes, nose, ears and paws.





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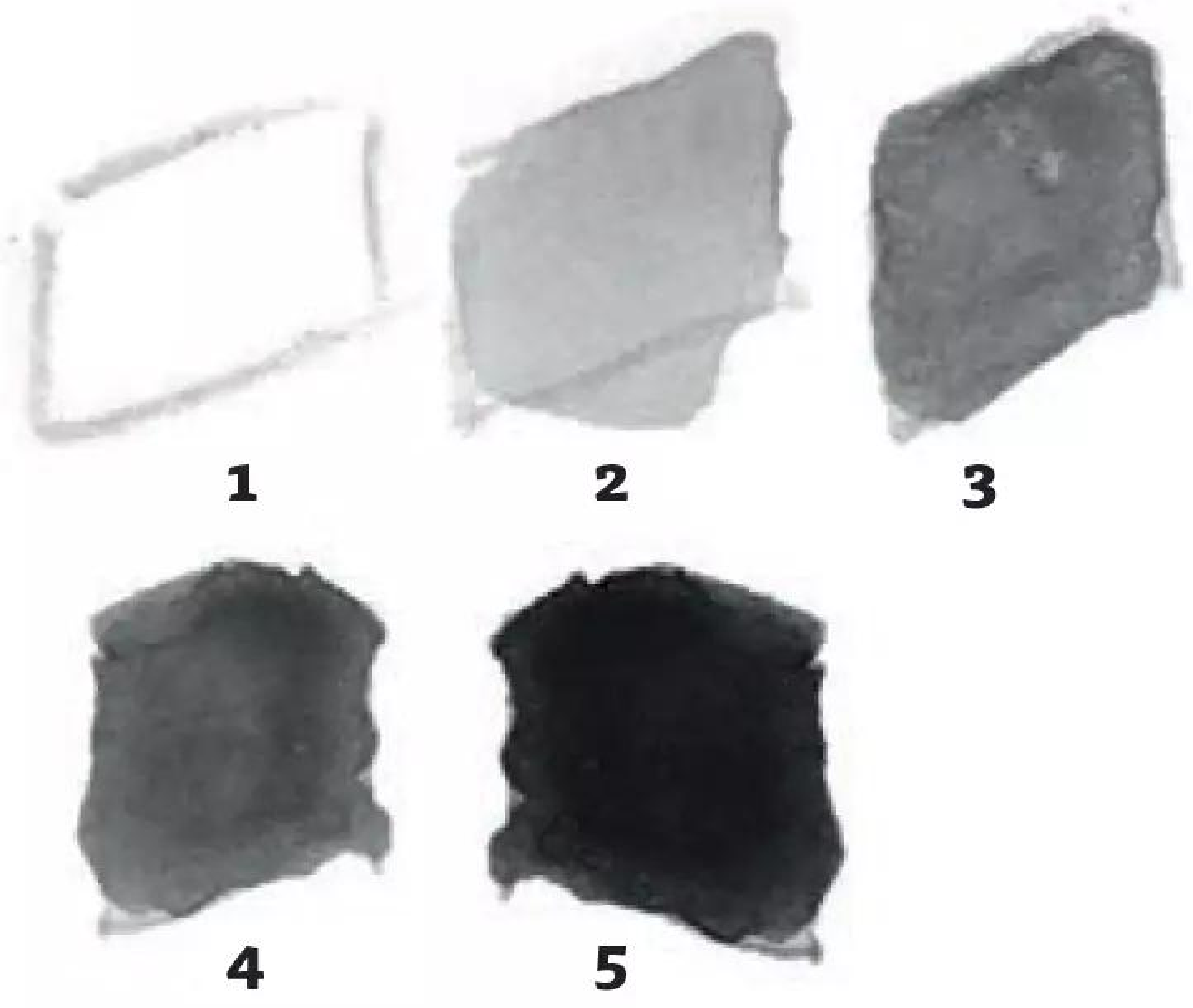
Tone essentials

In drawing, tone (which is also called value) refers to the relative lightness or darkness of a colour. It is important to learn how to graduate your tones from light to dark, creating a subtle range of intermediate greys between the two. First, identify the areas of maximum light and maximum shadow and then make incremental steps between the two.

TONAL RANGE

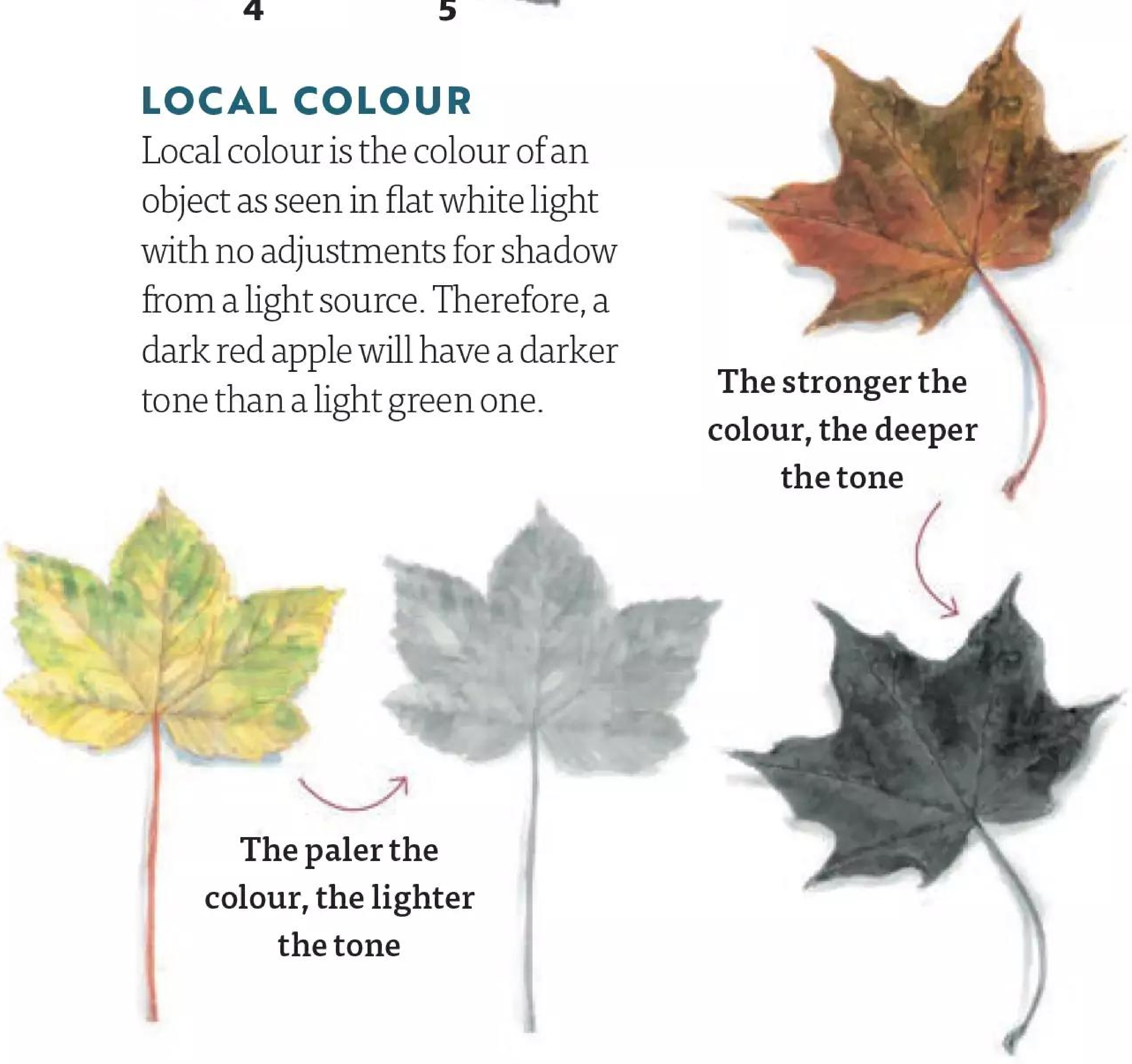
While I normally work with five tones, I reduce the tonal range to a minimum of three tones in certain sketching situations for simplification (white, mid-grey and black). In others, there might be as many as eight. When working on a drawing, challenge yourself by creating a variety of tones. You can adjust tones as you draw by changing the pressure you place on your pencil or by adjusting the saturation of the pigmentation. With watercolour and ink, add more water to lighten the tone and allow greater transparency.



Five-step tonal value scale
The majority of drawings in this book are carried out with a five-tone value scale that is easily manageable.

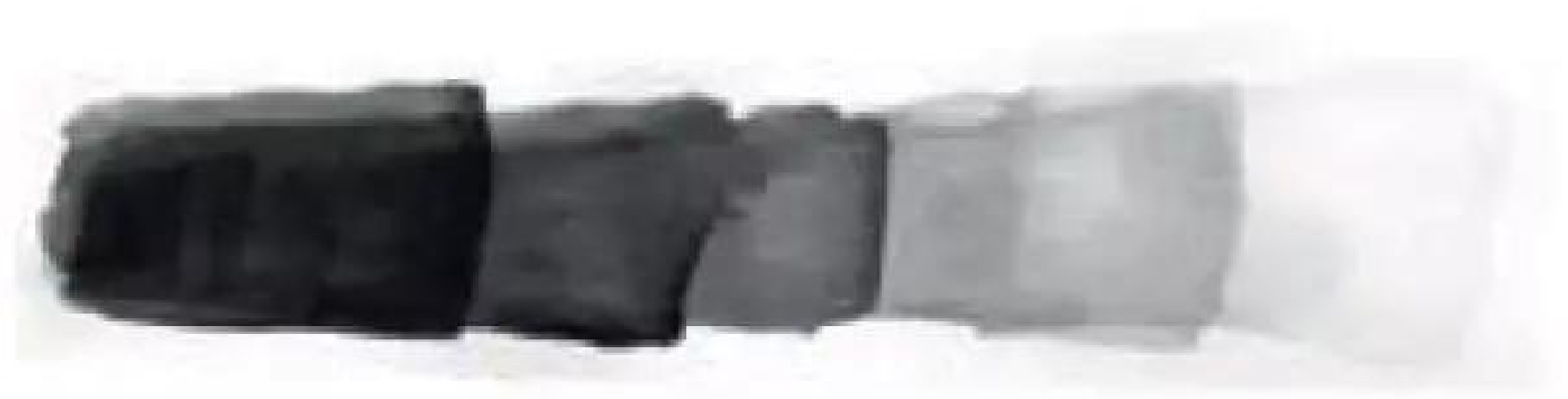
LOCAL COLOUR

Local colour is the colour of an object as seen in flat white light with no adjustments for shadow from a light source. Therefore, a dark red apple will have a darker tone than a light green one.



The stronger the colour, the deeper the tone

The paler the colour, the lighter the tone



Swatches of overlying ink in toned segments

Cross-hatching with a dip pen and ink

4B graphite pencil

Ink

Watercolour

TONAL TRANSITIONS

Tones can be defined by segments in a similar manner to painting-by-numbers, but more often they are created with gradients. It is worth spending time practising how to create smooth and even transitions in a variety of different media. A skilful blending of tonal transitions is satisfying to the eye.

HATCHING AND CROSS-HATCHING

Among the ways to create gradients is hatching, a technique that creates closely placed lines by using a zigzag motion. Cross-hatching goes a step further, using intersecting lines. In both cases, the denser the line spacing, the darker your object will appear, and if the lines follow the contour of the object, they can create form and sculpt volume.

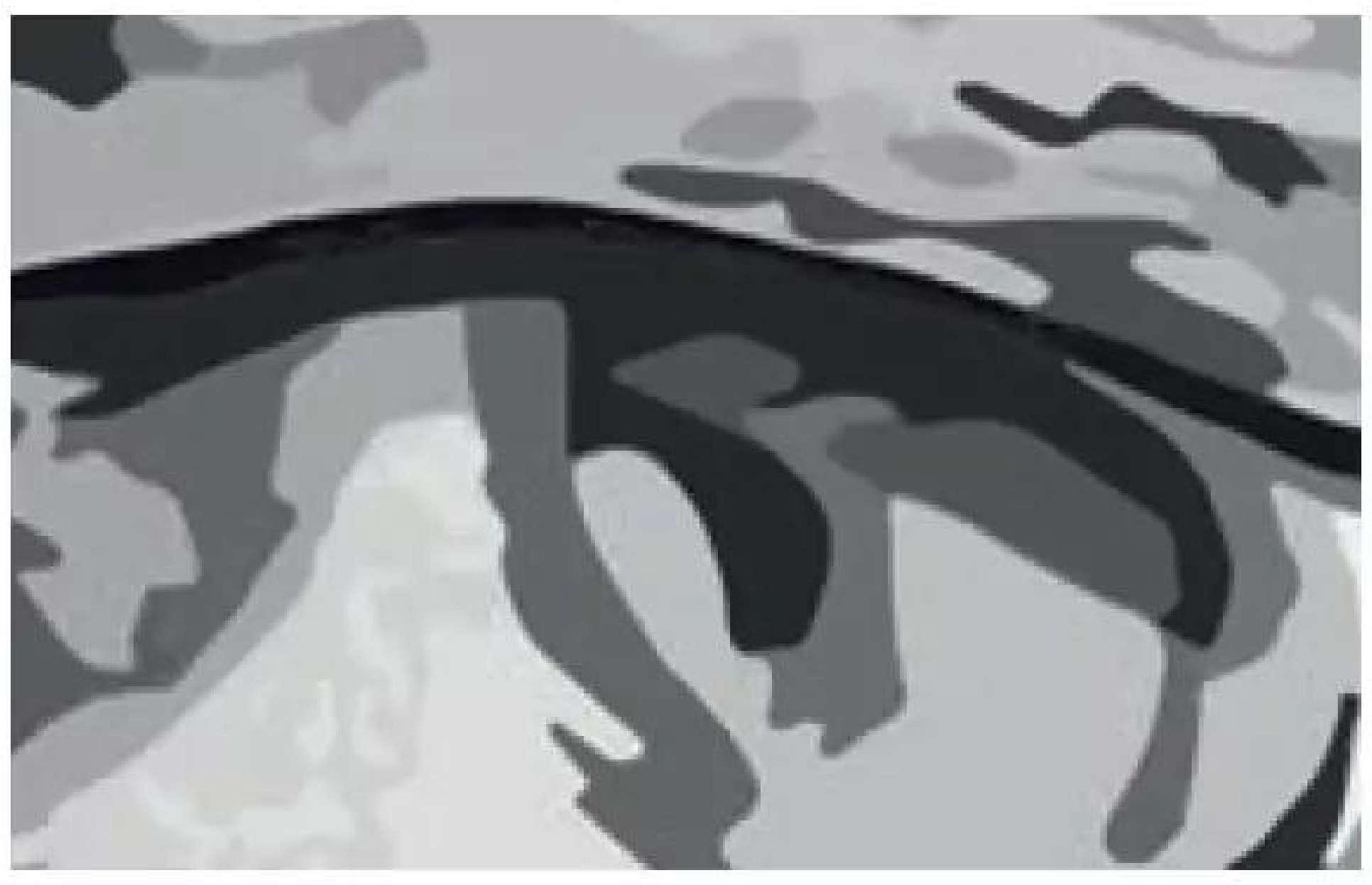
WASH

A drawing method that sits in between drawing and painting is a wash. When it is applied, the medium is wet. A wash can be created with brush markers, ink or watercolour. The tone is lightened with wet washes, typically by adding more water.

LIGHT AND SHADE

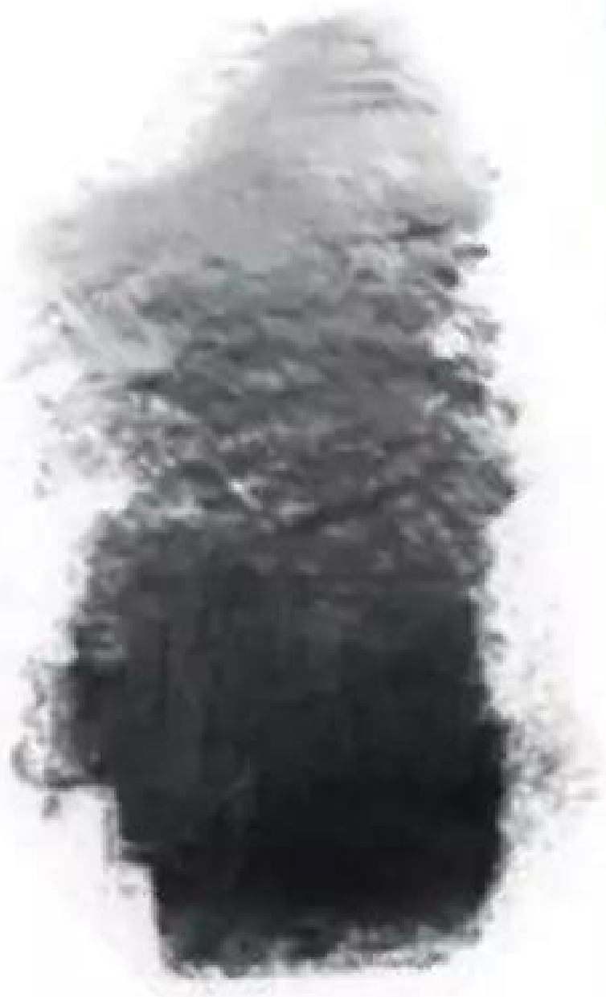
The illusion of light coming from the page is partnered with its opposite: shade. Learning to blend tones in the light and getting the relationship right for the dark shade tones captures light on the paper.

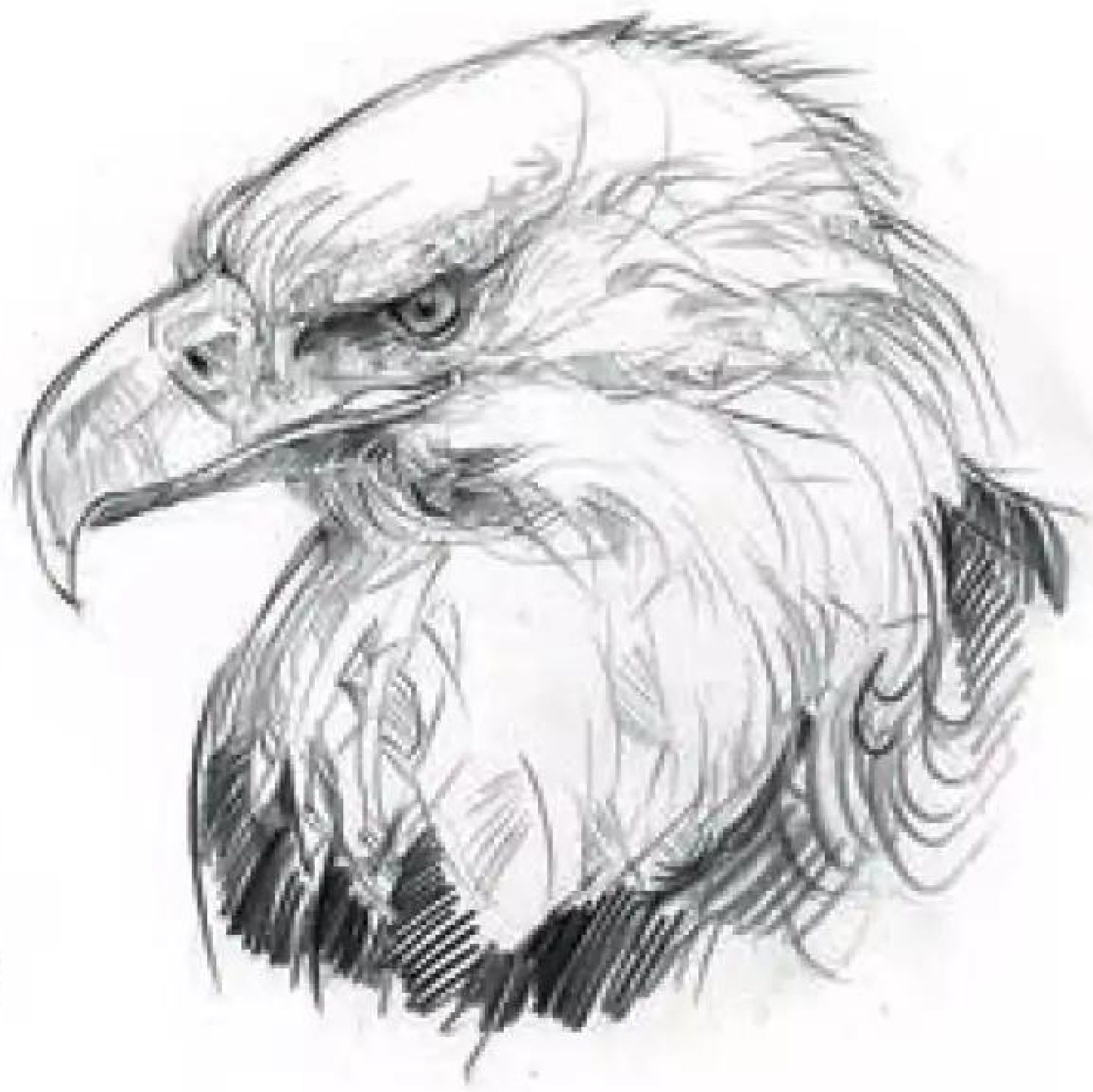
Tonal segments



Tone can be seen as interlocking puddles that are drawn shape to shape.

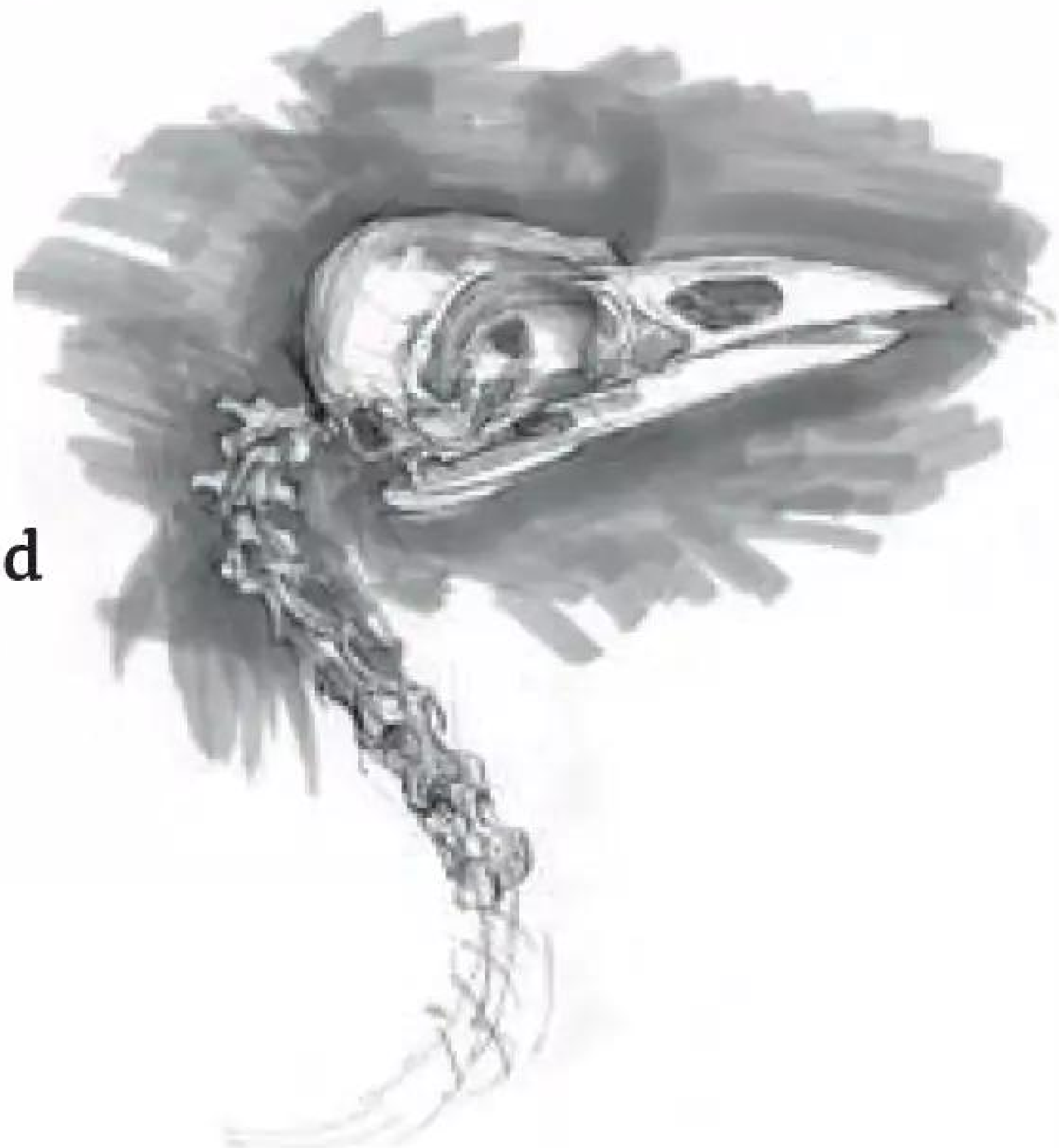
Charcoal as a medium provides one of the most diverse ranges of tonal value, with rich velvety blacks.



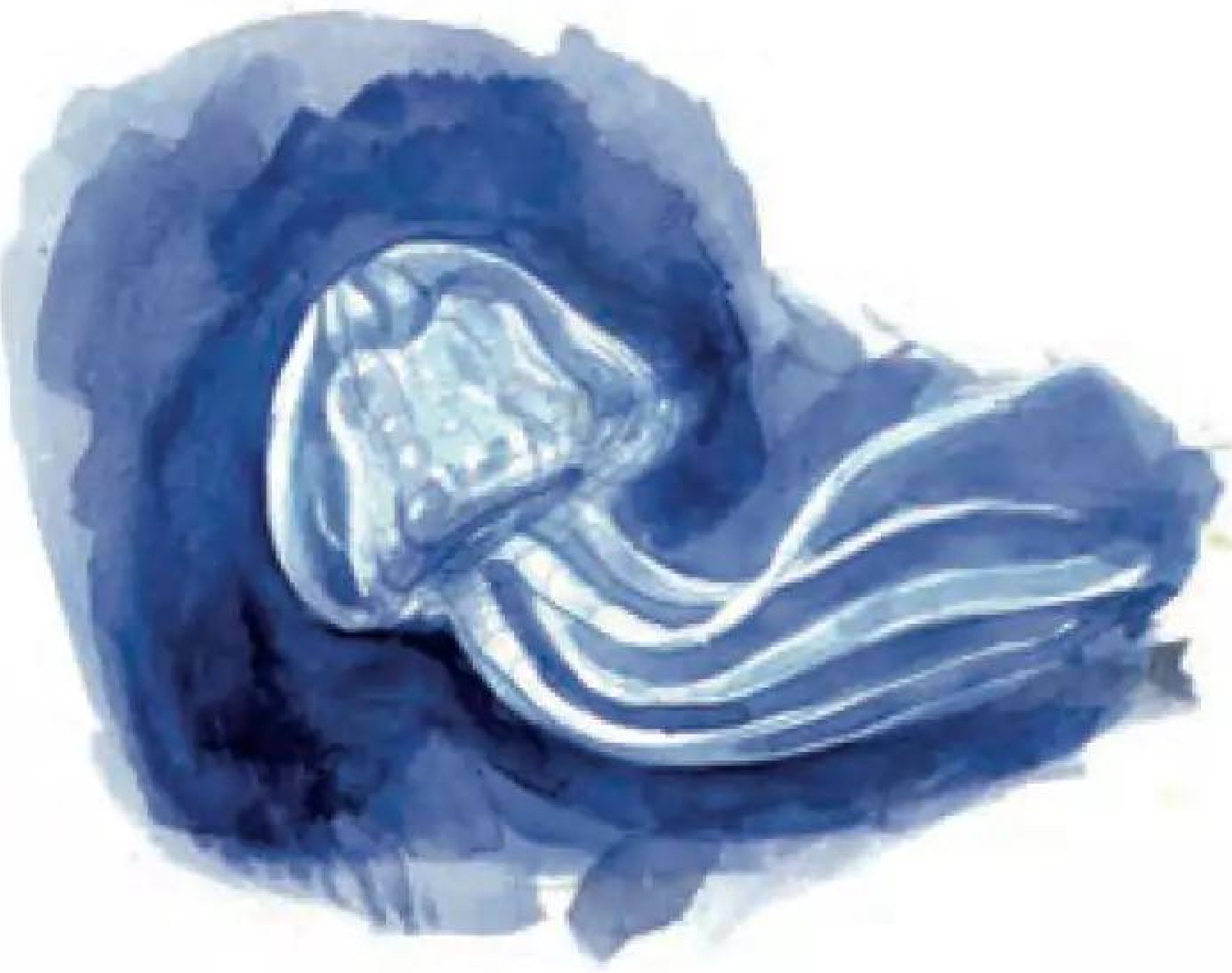


Graphite pencil
A sharp graphite pencil can create detailed shading.

> *'If I could have had my own way, I would have confined myself to black and white.'*
>
> **Edgar Degas**



Overlapping
Darker tones can be created by repeatedly overlapping light grey markers.



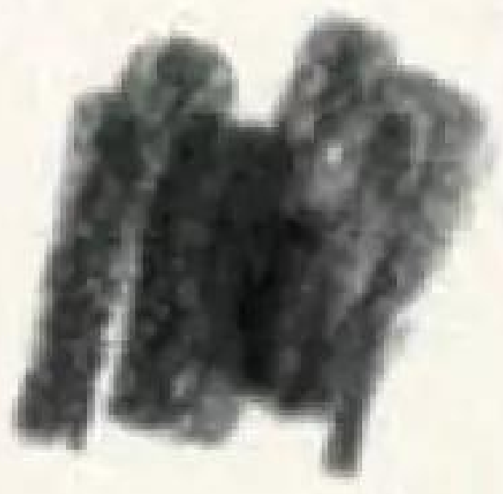
A wash with shading
Bioluminescence can be captured with translucent washes of watercolour and ink. Denoting shade creates the illusion of light from the remaining bare white paper. □

Making swatches
I will often make up little swatches before I begin to clarify in my mind what I am about to do. When using a mid-tone paper, I may reduce the range of swatches to four, including the paper itself.

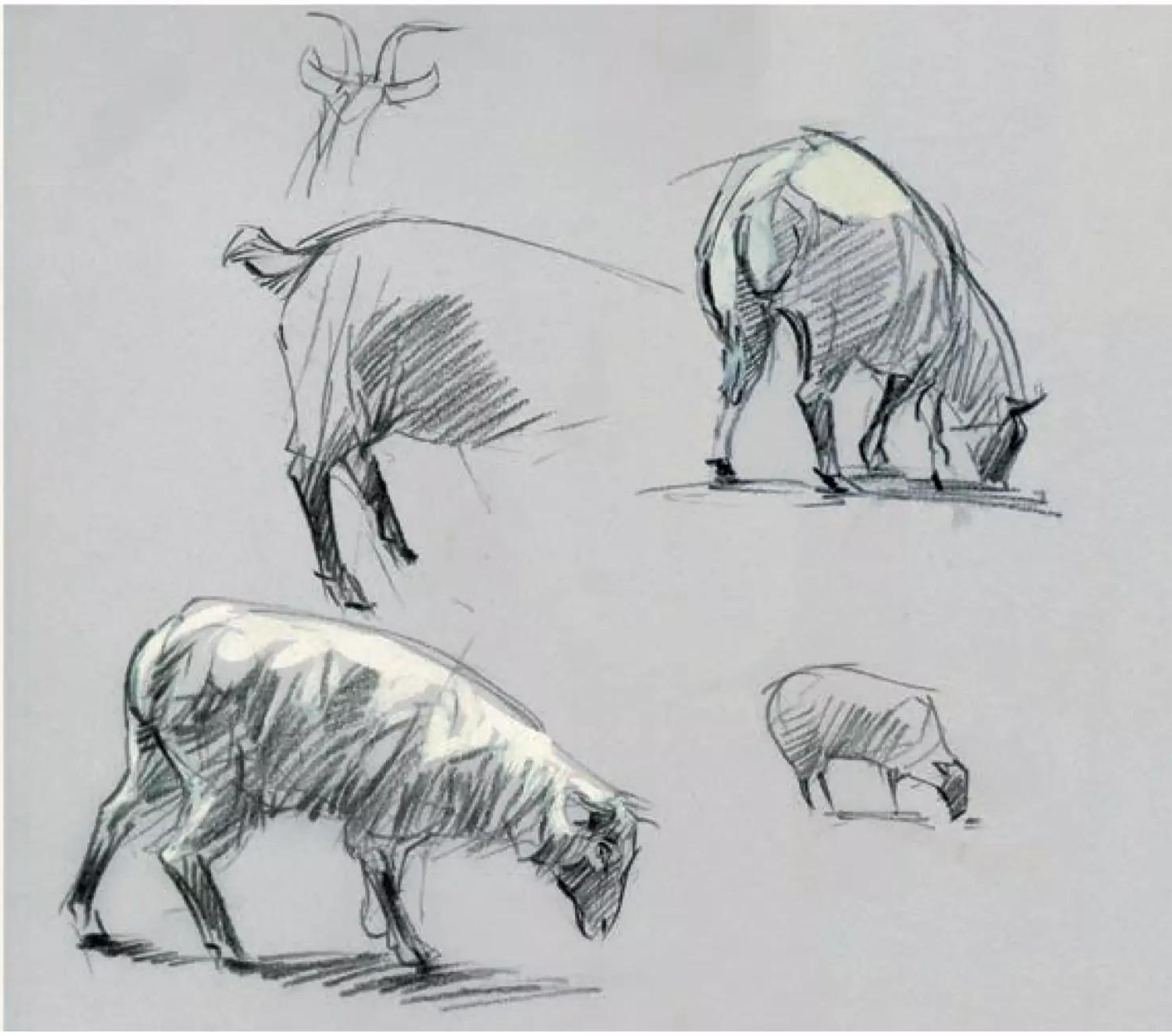
White fleece in sunlight created with white gouache

Shade of fleece as it turns away from the light

Fleece in shadow



Black socks of the legs



Light and shadows

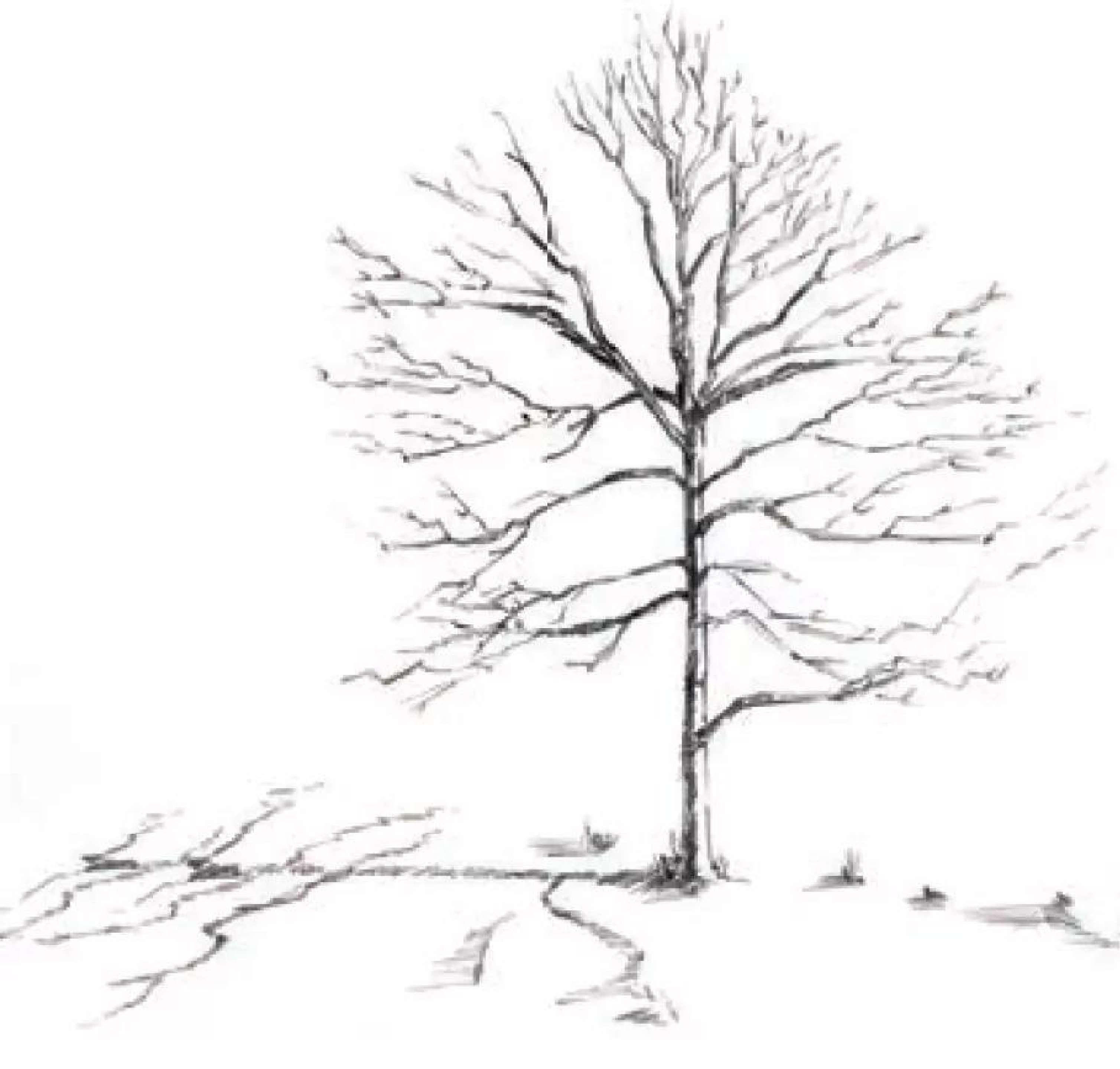
Without light, we would not be able to see, so it is critical to understand how we can capture it on the page. Whether noticeable or subtle, lighting helps bring depth and form to an image by providing areas of light and shadows. Objects in museums are often lit in such a way to emphasize their three-dimensional volume and to add drama to a piece to engage the visitor. Such is the case when we are creating a drawing. Lighting can also unify a drawing, making sure all the elements are imbibed with the same light source and brightness, such as creating early morning to late evening atmospheres. Lighting can bring romance to a scene and even turn an initially uninteresting subject, such as a beach towel, into a fascinating drapery study.

TIP

I always squint at my subject to help reduce visual noise and make it easier to see tonal blocks.

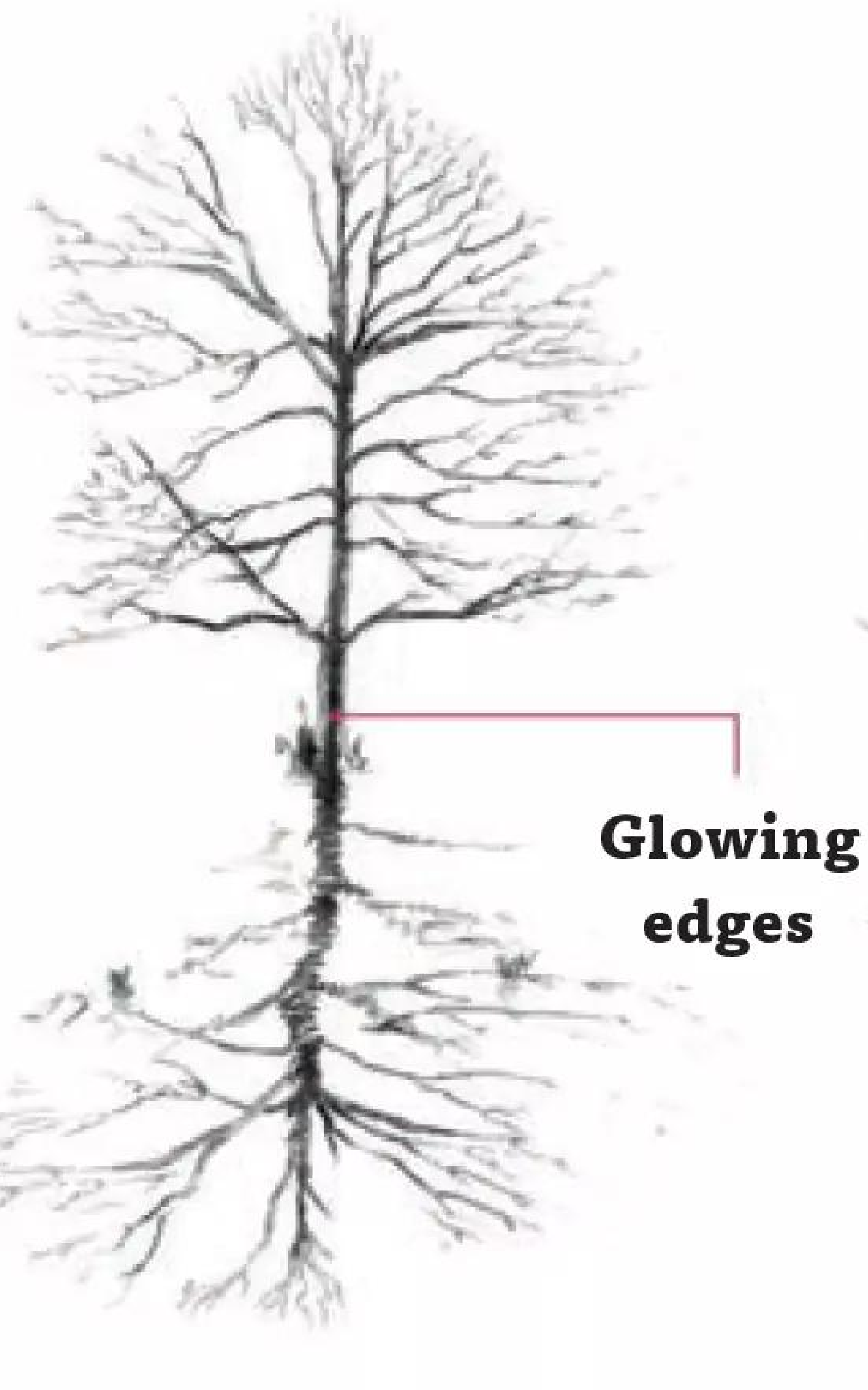
Lighting, which can come from different sources and directions and hit an object at different angles, plays an essential role in the tonal variety and lighting of the subject or scene. The direction or quality of light can enhance the feeling of form. In the evening, for example, the setting sun envelops subjects within the landscape, wrapping them with its golden light. This is in contrast to the flattening qualities of the midday sun.

In a high key image, such as a sunrise, all the tones are typically lighter than mid-grey. Whereas a low key image could be thought of as a nocturne, where the majority of tones are darker than mid-grey. There are, of course, many exceptions to this where images use a full range of tonal values. Some artists purposely limit their tonal range to create quiet, subtle still life images of everyday objects.



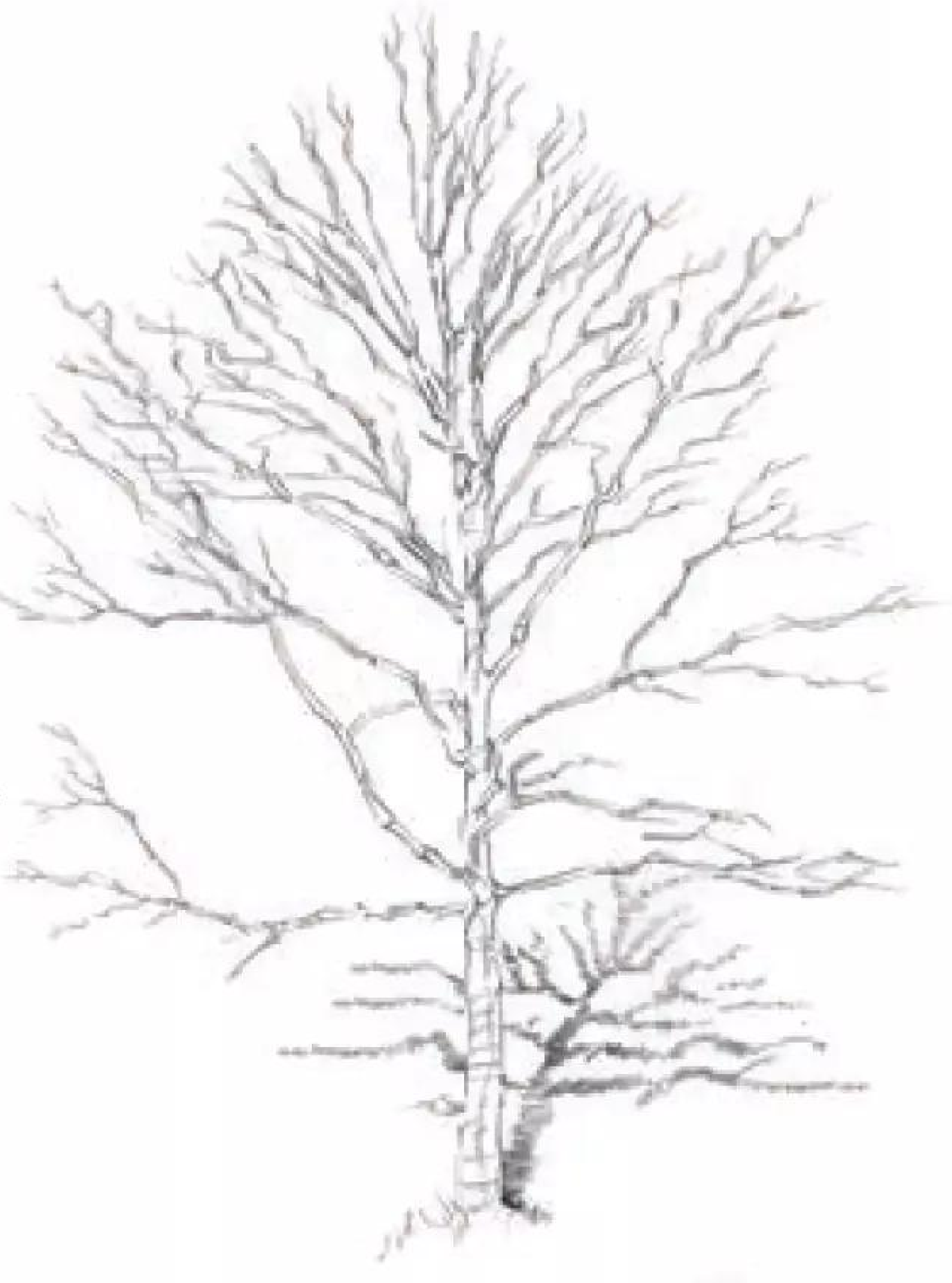
SIDE LIGHTING

Light that strikes the subject from one side is called side lighting. It illuminates one side of the subject while the far side beyond its reach will be dark. The shadow is cast to the side. It is effective for expressing both form and drama.



BACKLIGHTING

Illuminating the subject from behind creates backlighting and places it in silhouette. This often creates glowing edges on the subject, as the light peels around the form and shadows are cast in front of it.



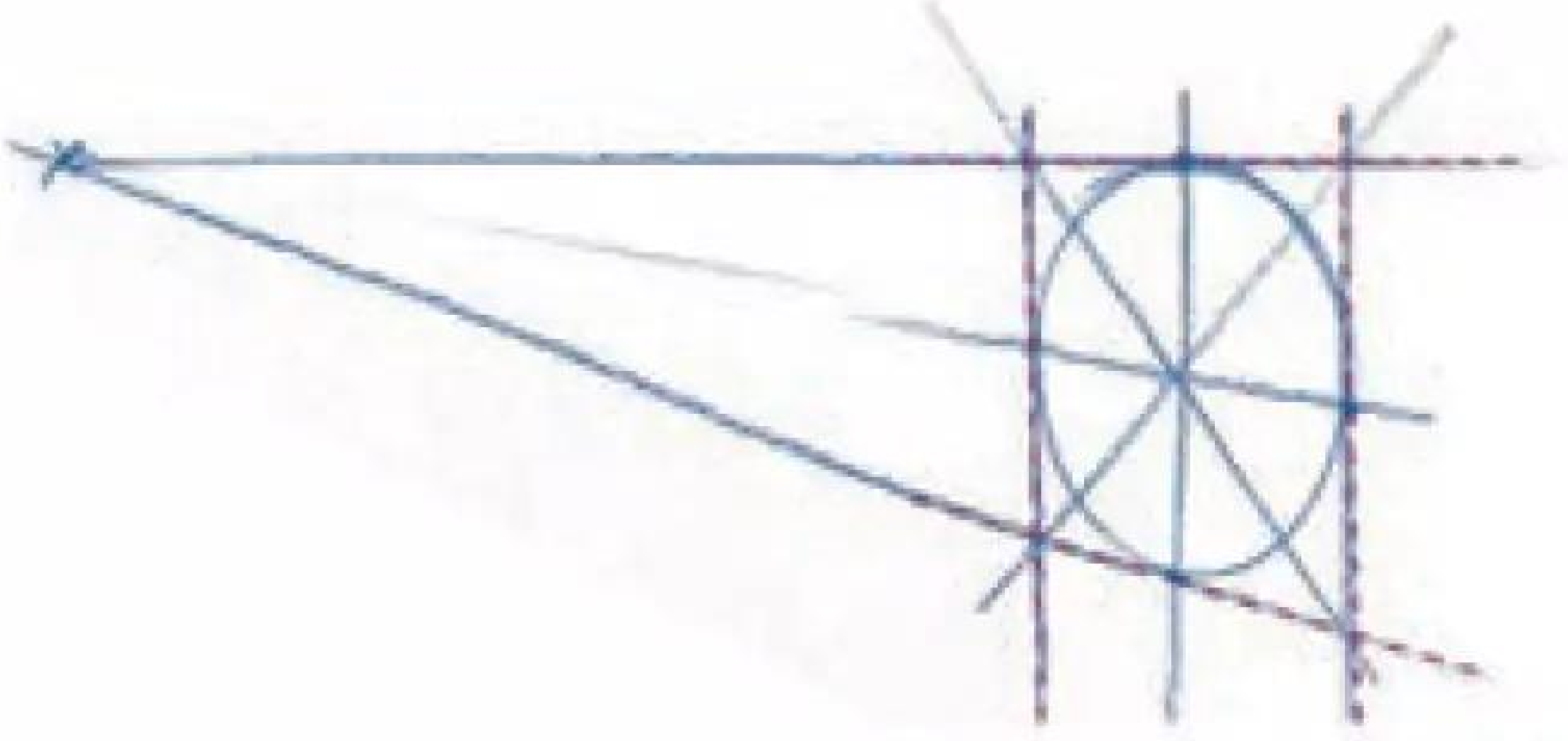
FRONT LIGHTING

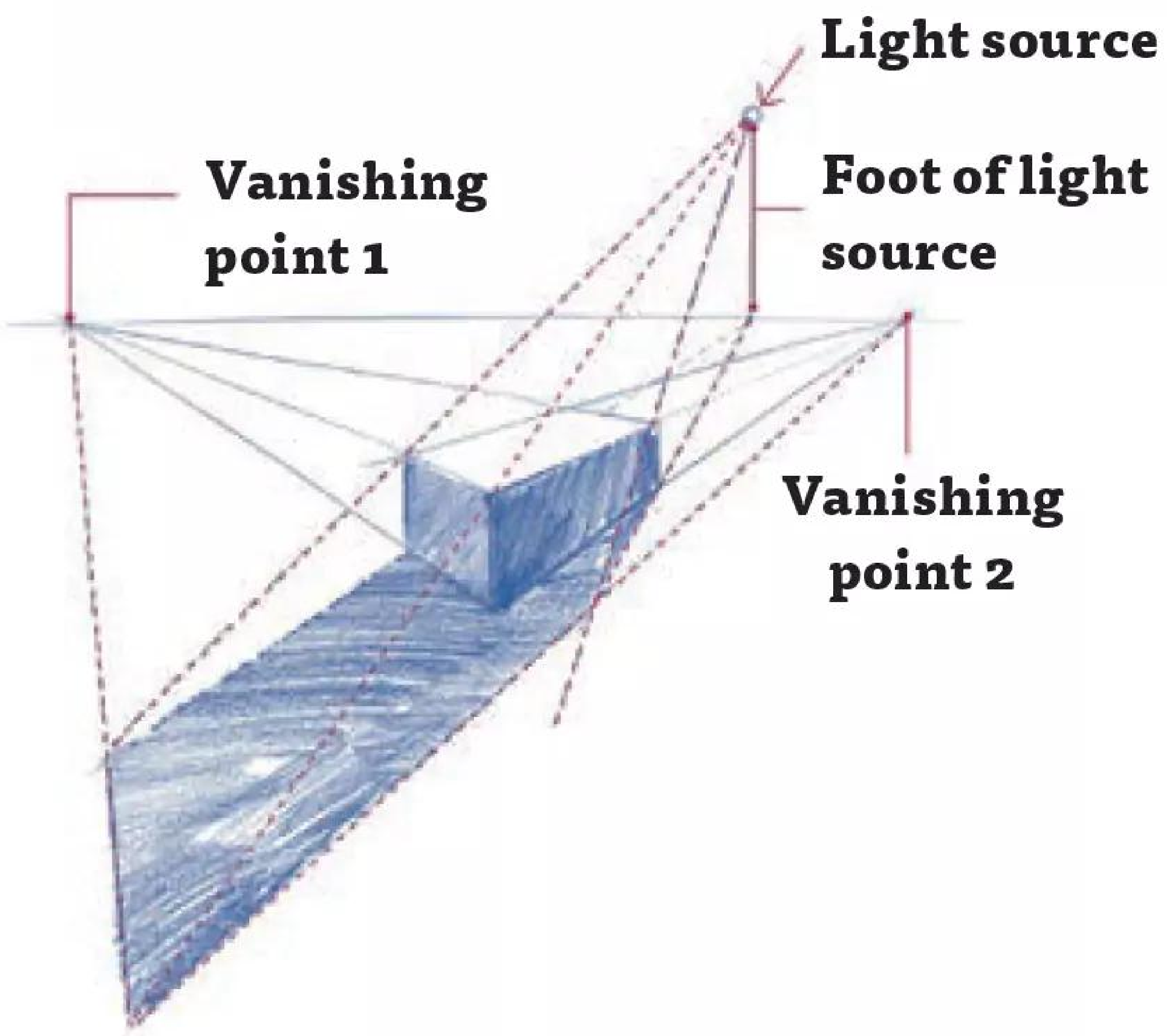
Front lighting is when the light source is in front of the subject, such as when the sun is behind your back. This clearly illuminates the subject, although it can also flatten it as well. The shadow is cast behind the subject.

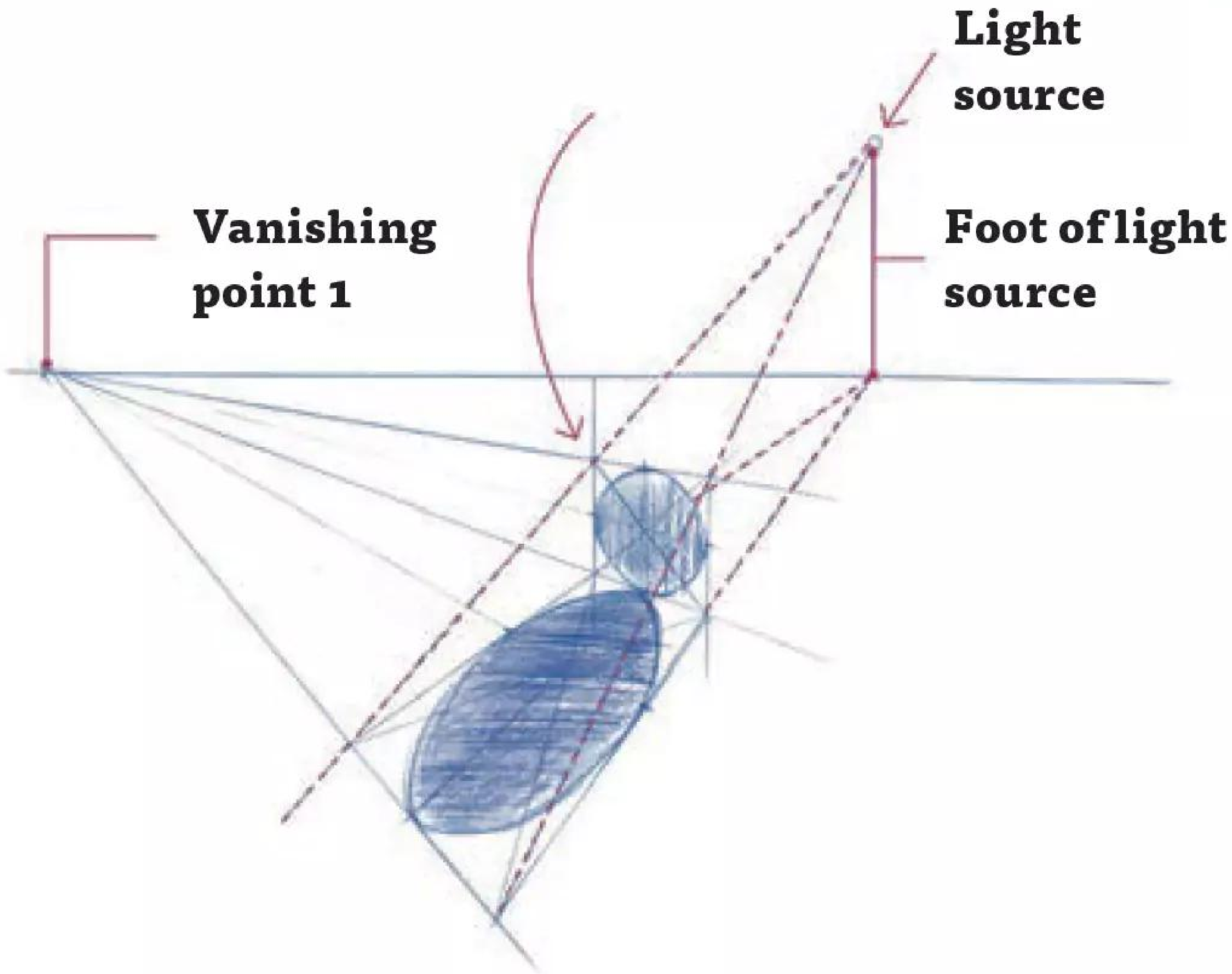
HOW TO CALCULATE SHADOWS

Knowing how to construct cast shadows for compositional purposes is a valuable skill to have. Since light travels in a straight line, shadows created by an obstacle that are projected on planes will follow linear perspective rules. To establish the 'foot' of a light source, draw a point that represents the light source, then draw a perpendicular line to the horizon. To calculate straight-line cast shadows, simply draw a direct line to its principal junctions with the object. A round or organic shape can be orientated in a frame placed in two-point perspective.

Using frames
You can use a square frame to place a circle within it and calculate how the cast shadow would fall on the ground.

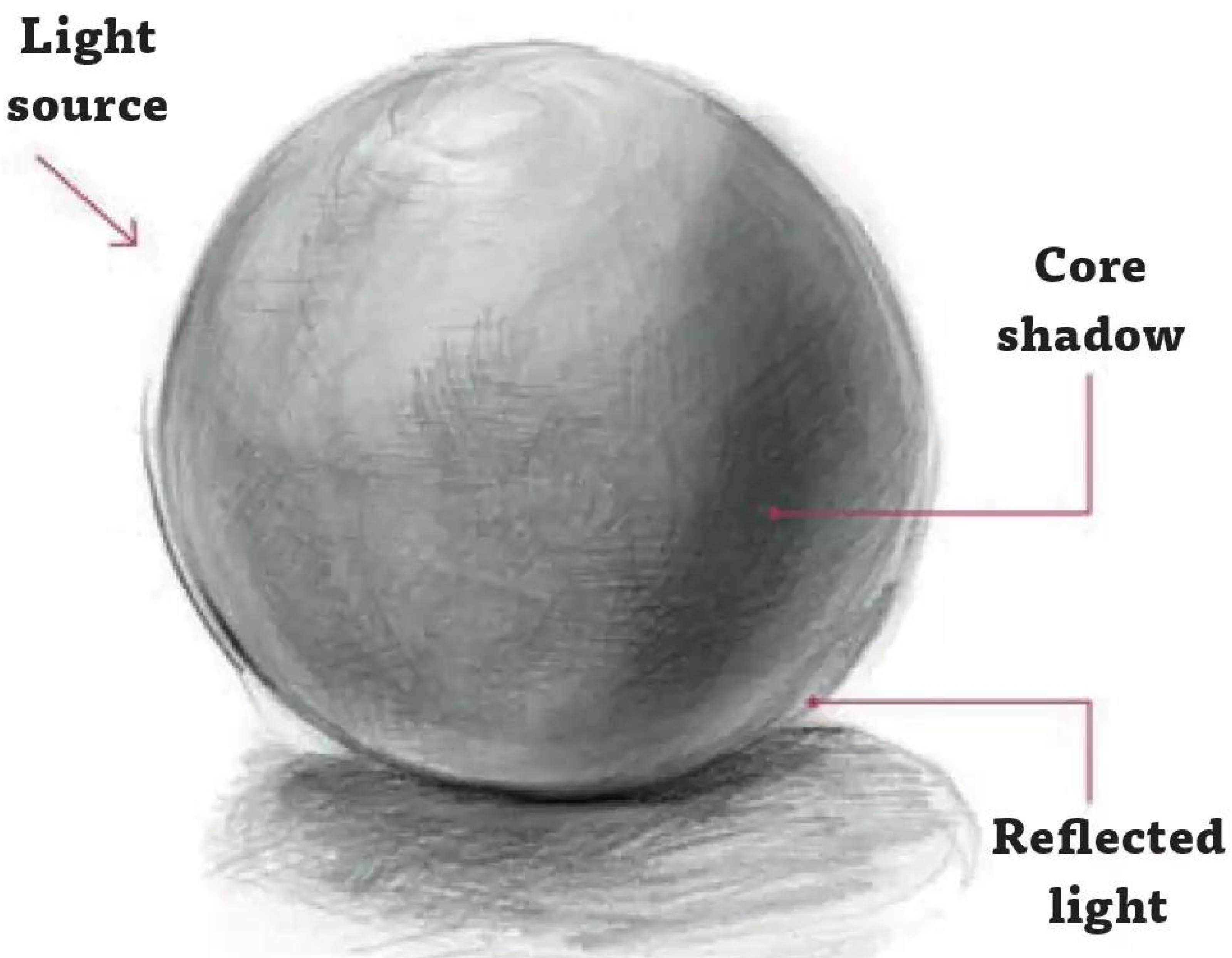



Light source
Vanishing point 1
Foot of light source
Vanishing point 2


Light source
Vanishing point 1
Foot of light source

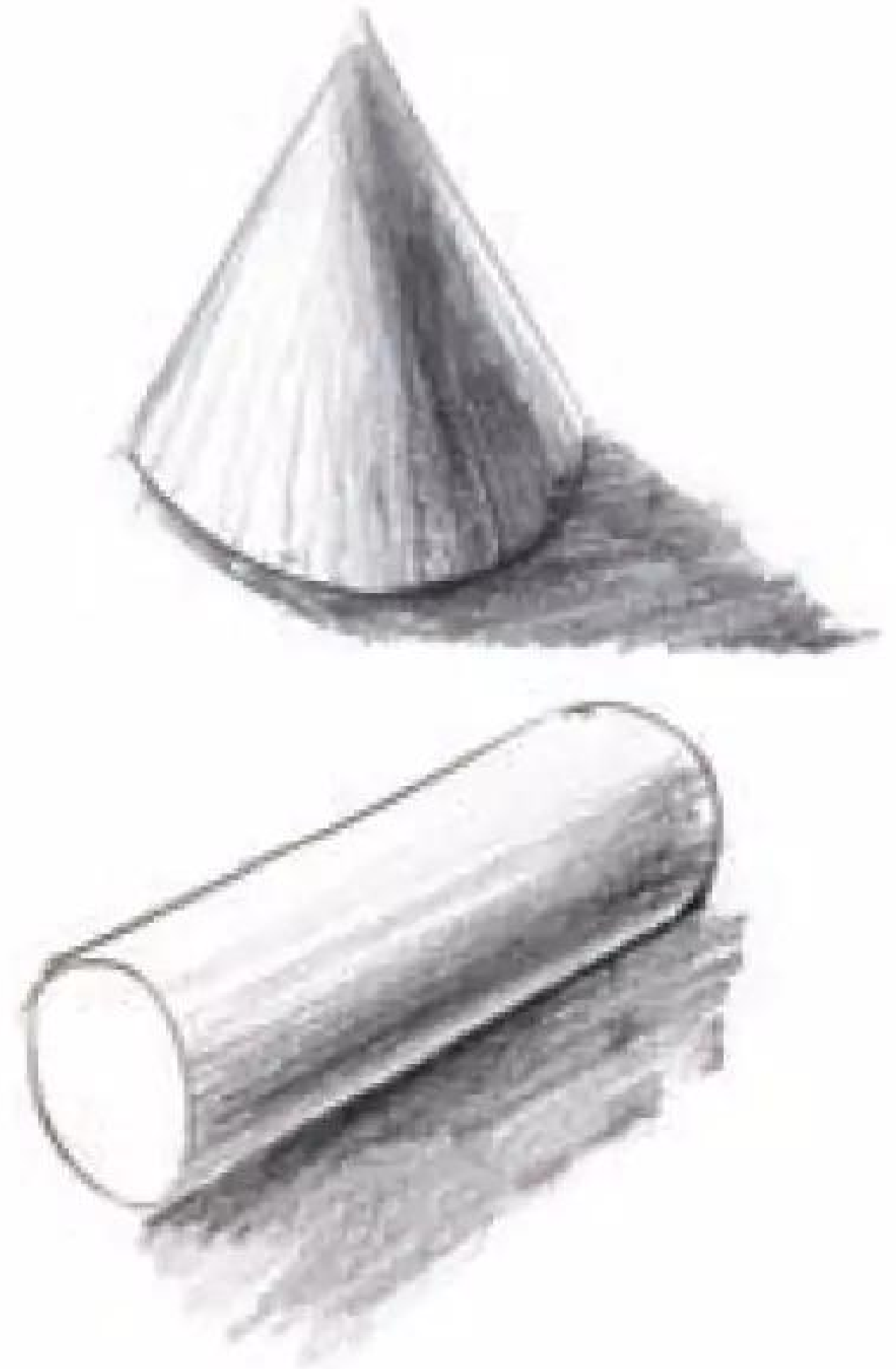
CORE SHADOW

The core shadow is a dark band that appears where light and shadow meet. On round objects, reflected light from other surfaces means that the darkest shading is not on the edge of the form.


Light source
Core shadow
Reflected light

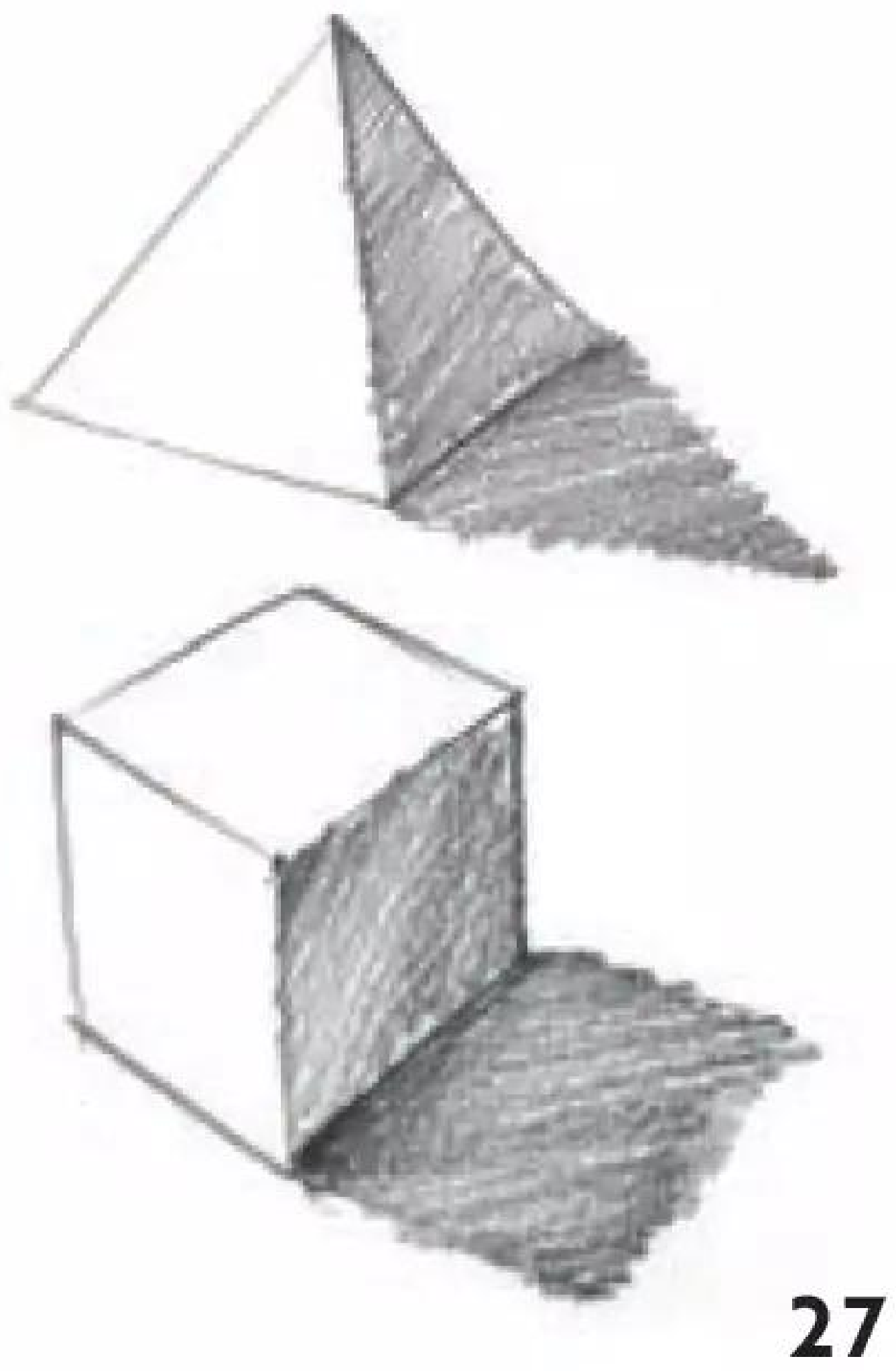
PRIMARY FORM SHADOWS

Notice that cast shadows have a softer edge than the forms of most solid objects.



Shadow of form with a gradient
Curved forms will have a gradient shadow as the light reaches around them.

Uniform shadow of form
Forms that have flat planes will have a consistent, uniform shadow rather than a gradient. □

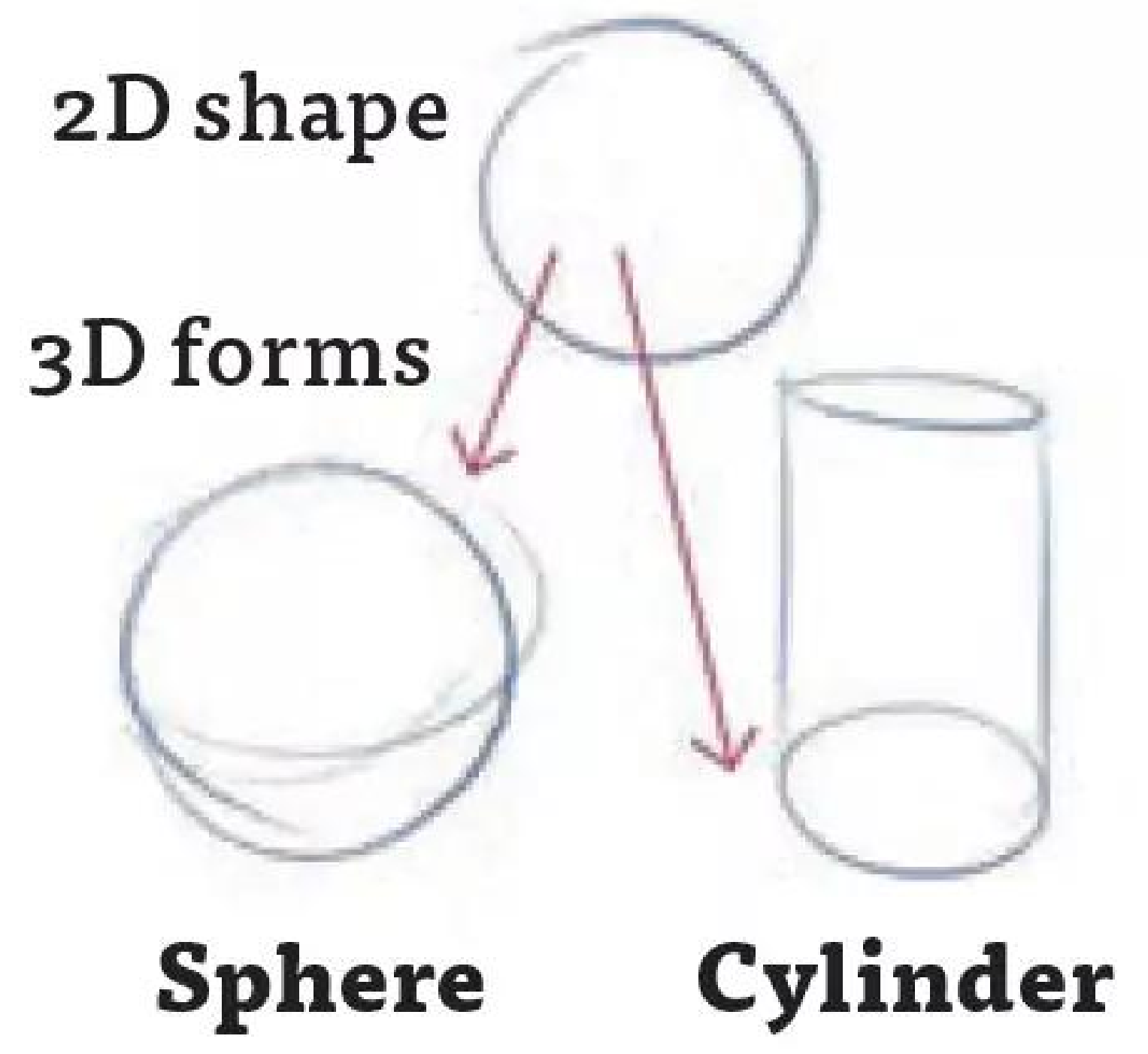


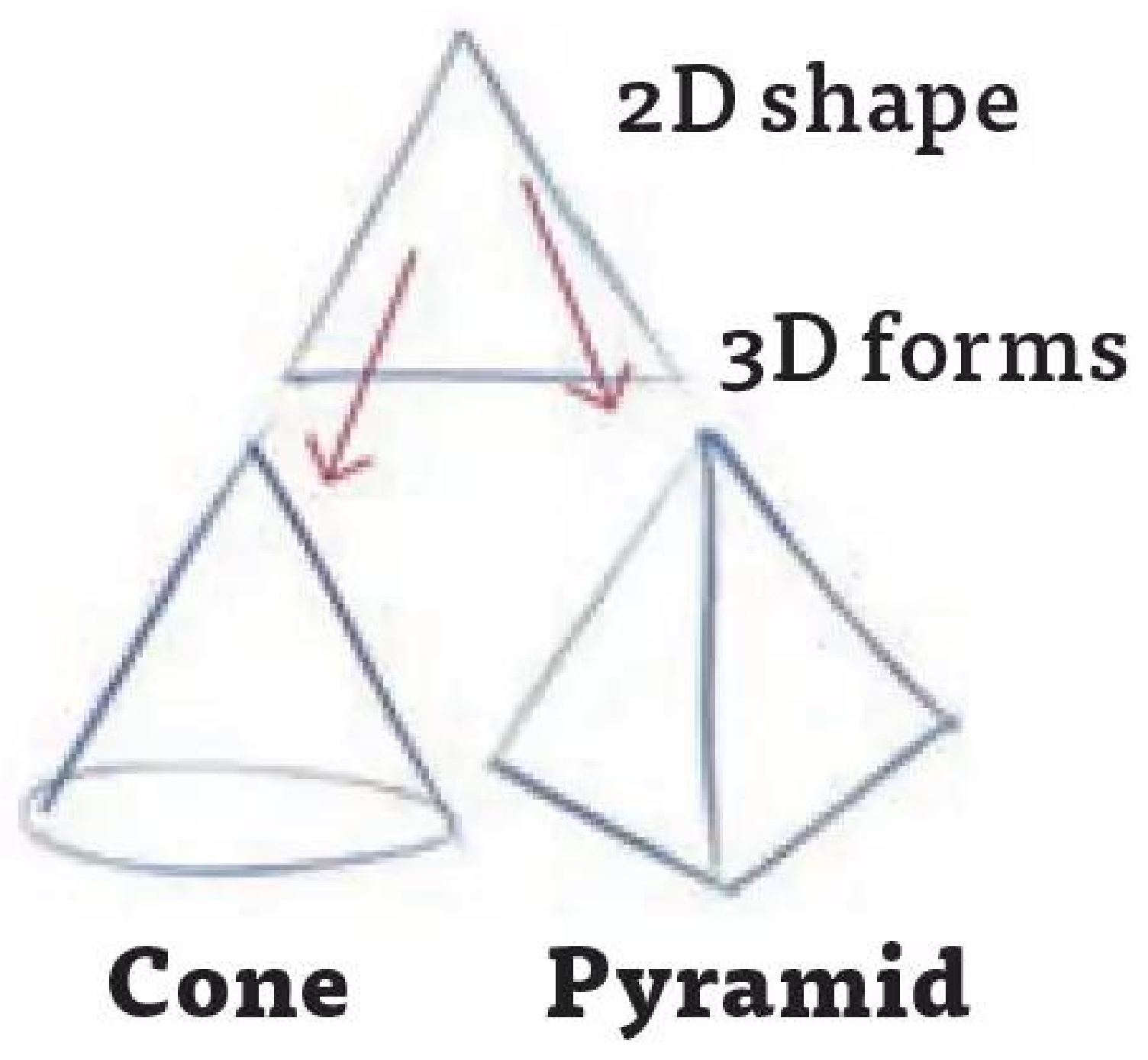
Form essentials

You know how to draw the flat two-dimensional shape of a subject on paper, but how can you convey form, giving it mass and weight? There are a few tips and tricks that will help bring a sense of mass to your subject, giving a sense that a physical form is being sculpted on the paper.

GEOMETRIC FORMS

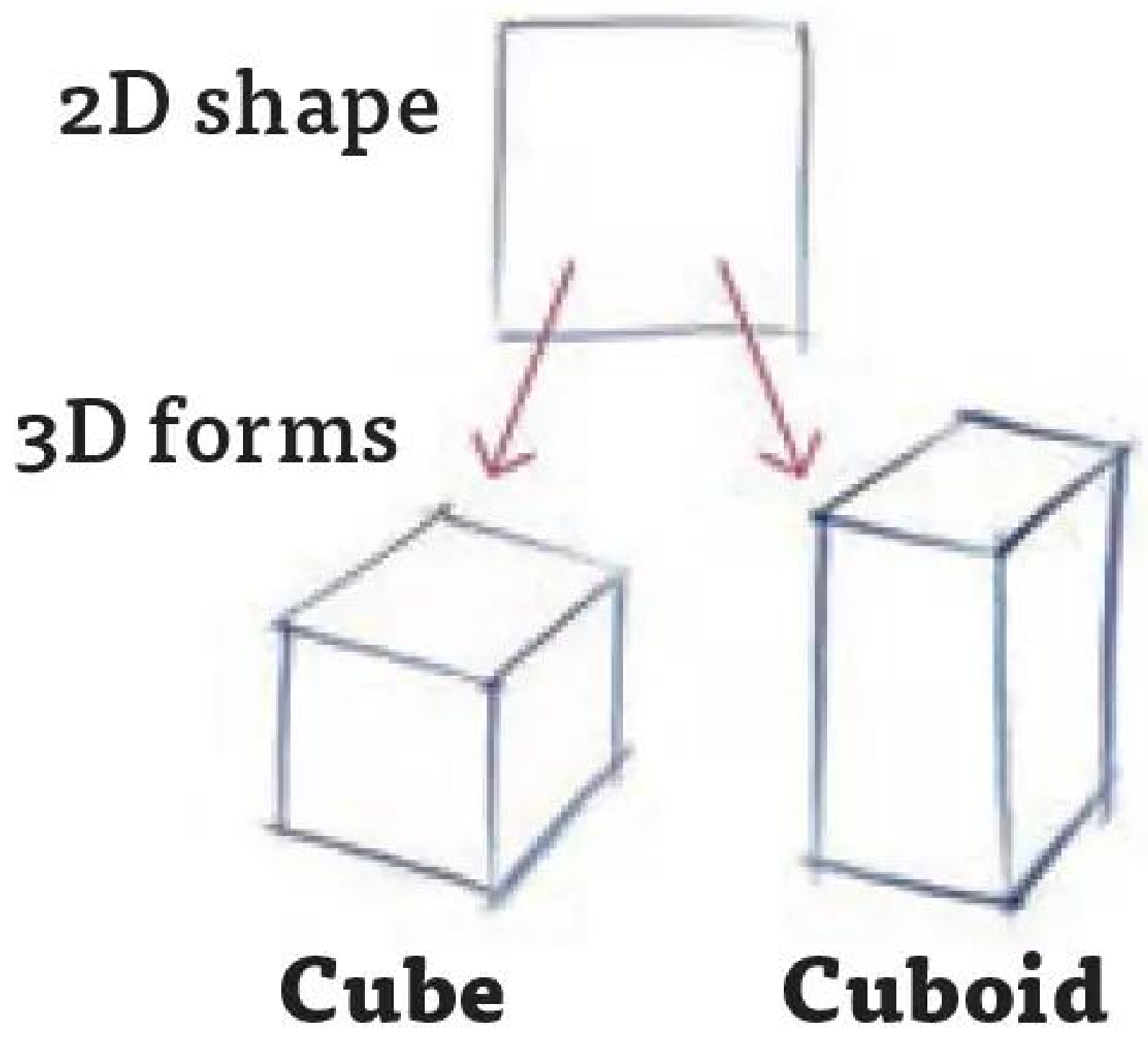
The primary geometric forms are the sphere, cube, pyramid, cone and cylinder. They are three-dimensional forms of the basic shapes .

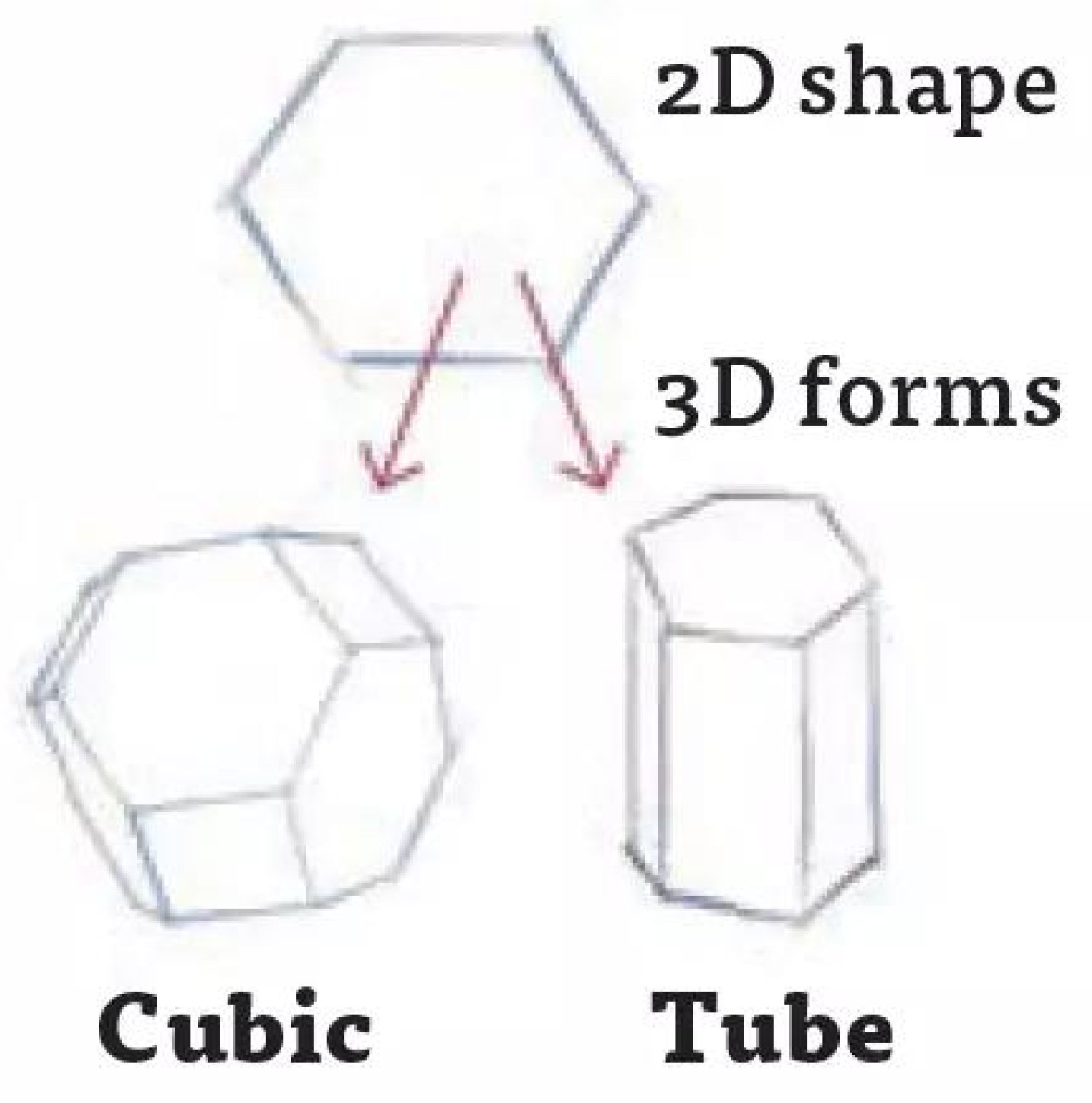




Circles and ellipses
The flat circle transforms into a sphere with some implied modelling, or it can be stretched into a cylinder. Circles are a good organic option for constructing biological forms, such as a gorilla's head.

Triangles
The upright shape of a triangle gives a feeling of stability, but upside down there's a feeling of imbalance. A triangle is the foundation of both the spherical cone seen in a carnivore's tooth or a hump on a camel's back.



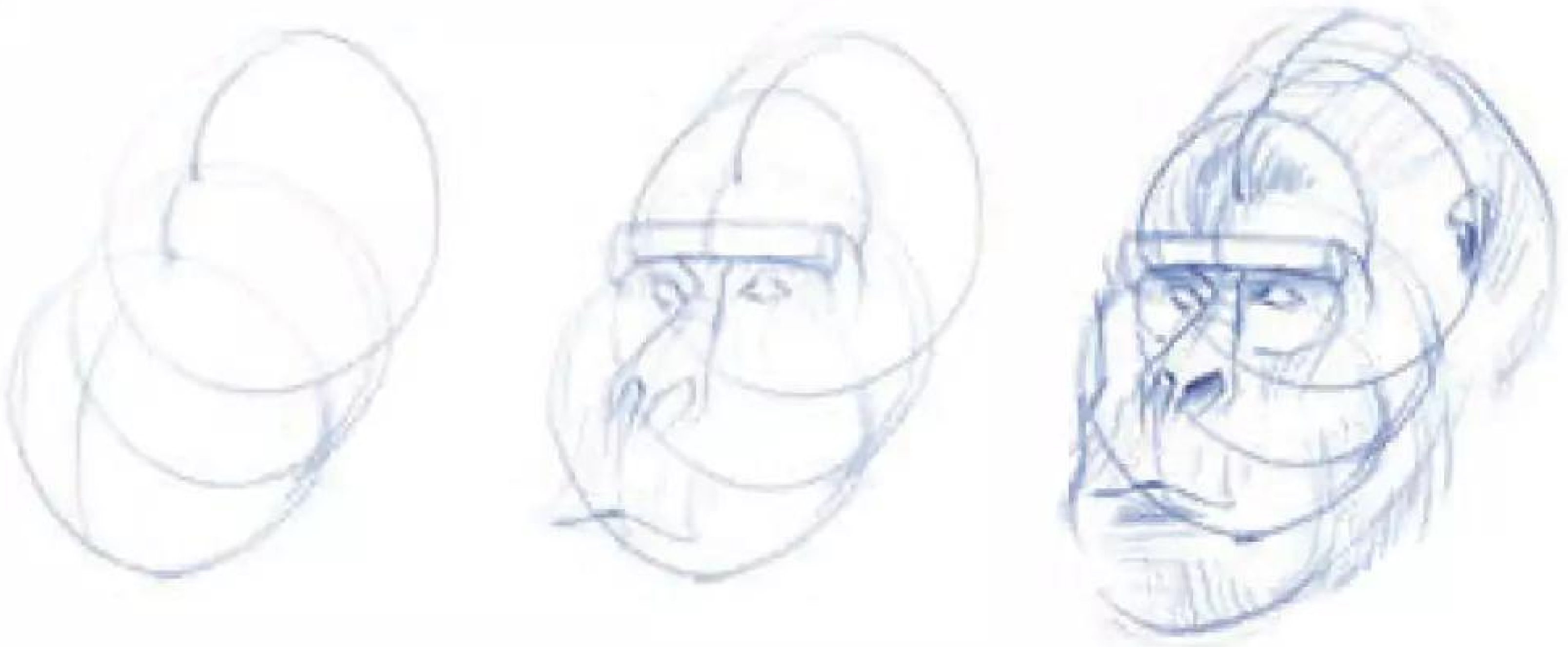


Squares
The square gives birth to the cube and cuboid forms, which are ideal building blocks for constructing and organizing organic forms, such as a dog's head (right).

Polygons
Polygons have three or more sides. Crystals are an example of naturally occurring three-dimensional geometric forms in nature. Quartz crystals often form hexagonal prisms.

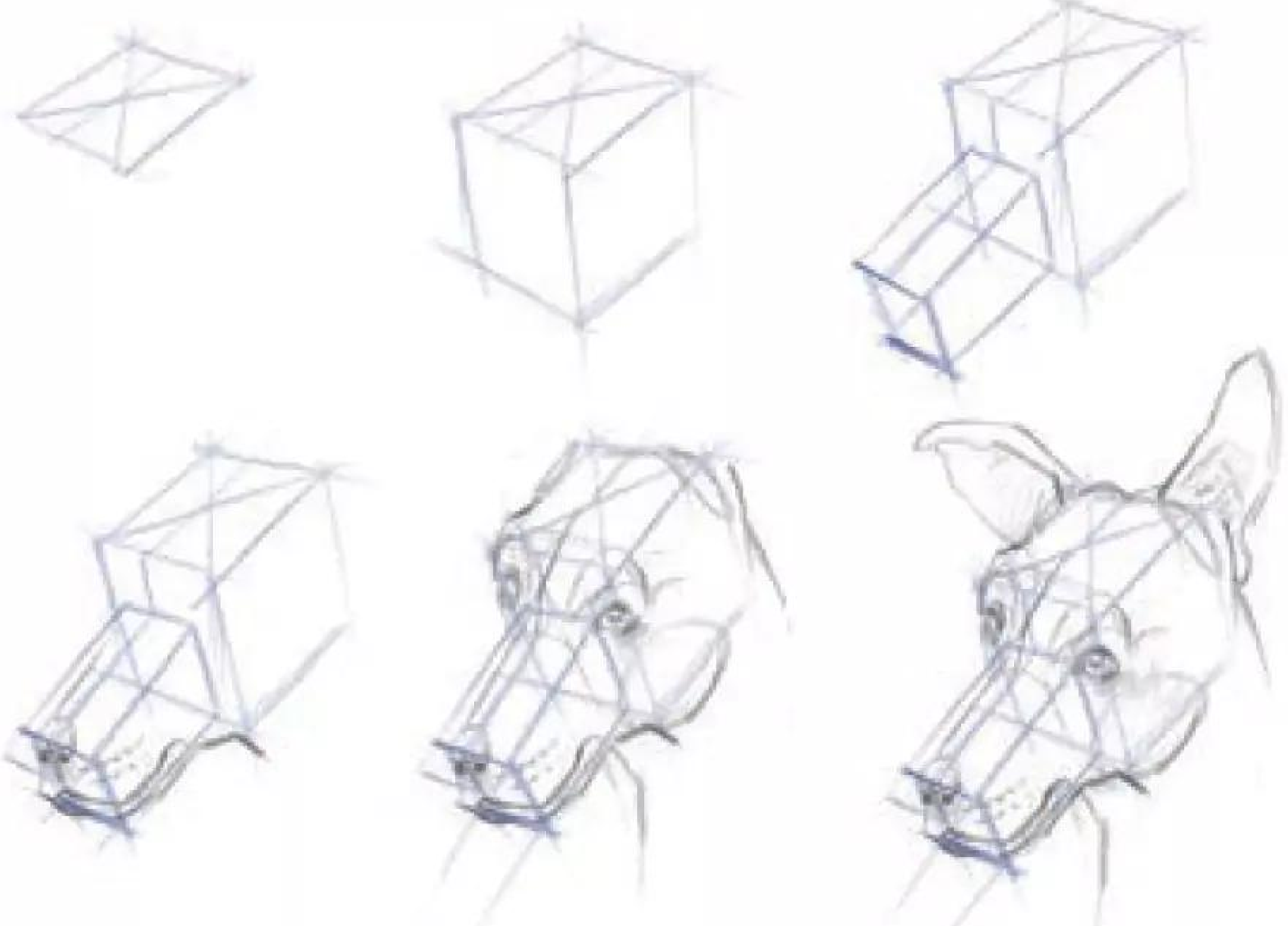
ORGANIC FORMS

We must consider form in its broadest sense when considering this element in nature. Clouds, for example, are forms of floating vapour, but the thick tree trunk of an oak is also an organic form. A rock structure created from a dark, rough stone has a solid form that carries great mass. However, forms in nature can also be delicate and light, such as a spider's web, swaying blades of grass and the skeleton of a decomposed leaf. And forms can be flat, such as sea kelp swaying in the sea, treated similarly to how Renaissance artists studied drapes as they waver in the water current. To help us organize these irregular, organic forms, boxes and spheres will provide good geometric frameworks.



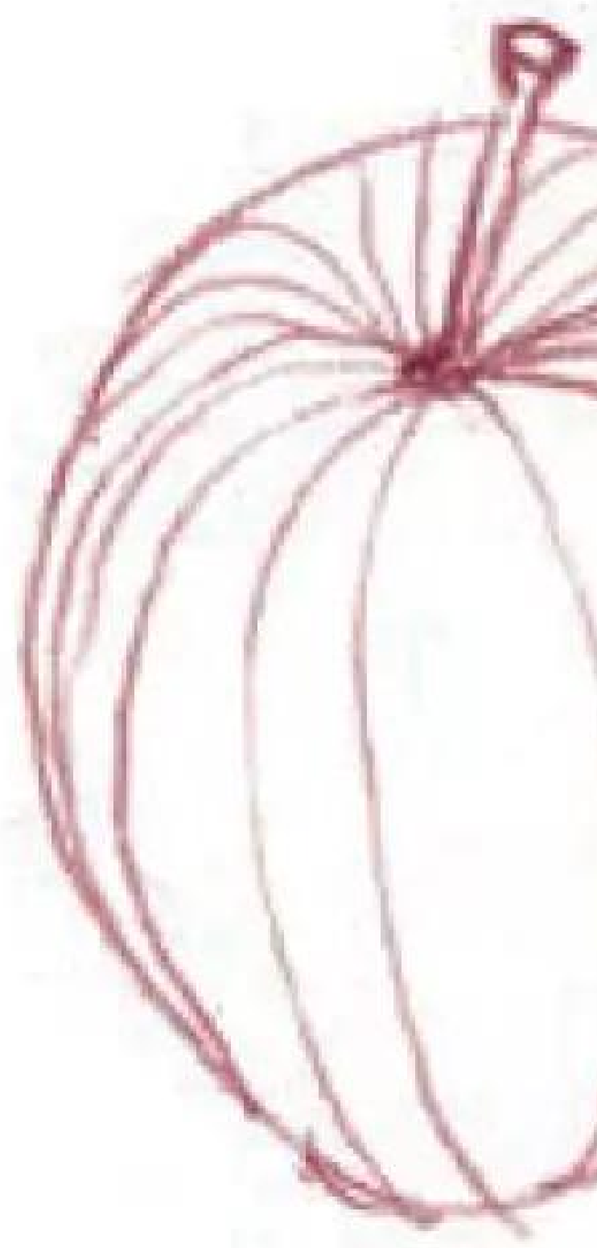
▲ **Gorilla head**
A more organic way of organizing the form of a gorilla's head is to begin with a three descending-circle widget with a tube for the ridge brow.

▼ **Dog head**
Draw a box and find the central line for the cranium, then add a smaller thinner muzzle box. The central line of symmetry is found by drawing an X.

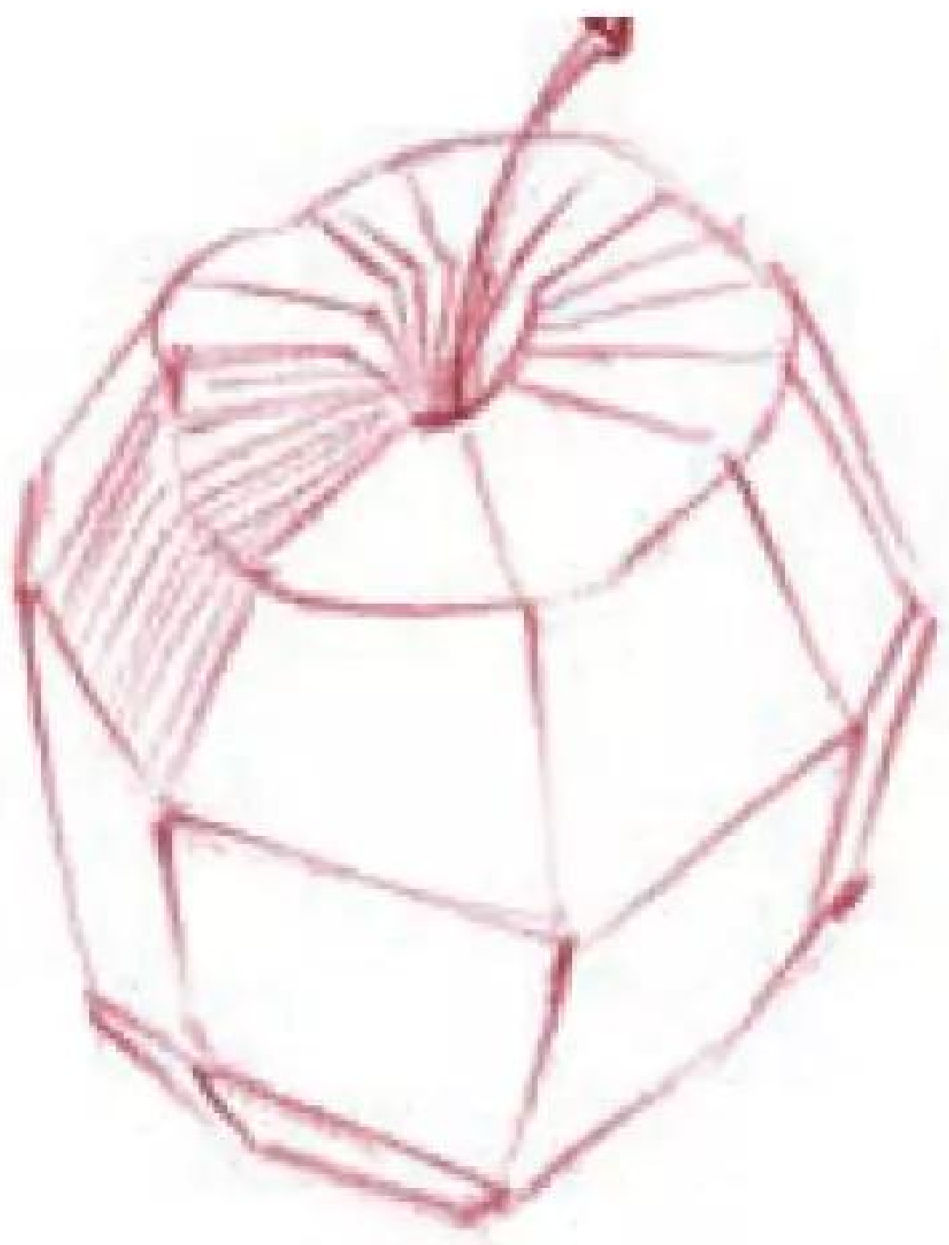


CREATING FORM

Shading can be used to capture form. The most popular methods are drawing topographic lines and adding tonal shading. The process of shading is one of the most fundamental drawing concepts. We must be able to appropriately shade objects to convey the illusion of form in a scene. In addition, shading also implies light and its opposite shade, which is necessary to express the illusion of light coming from the paper.



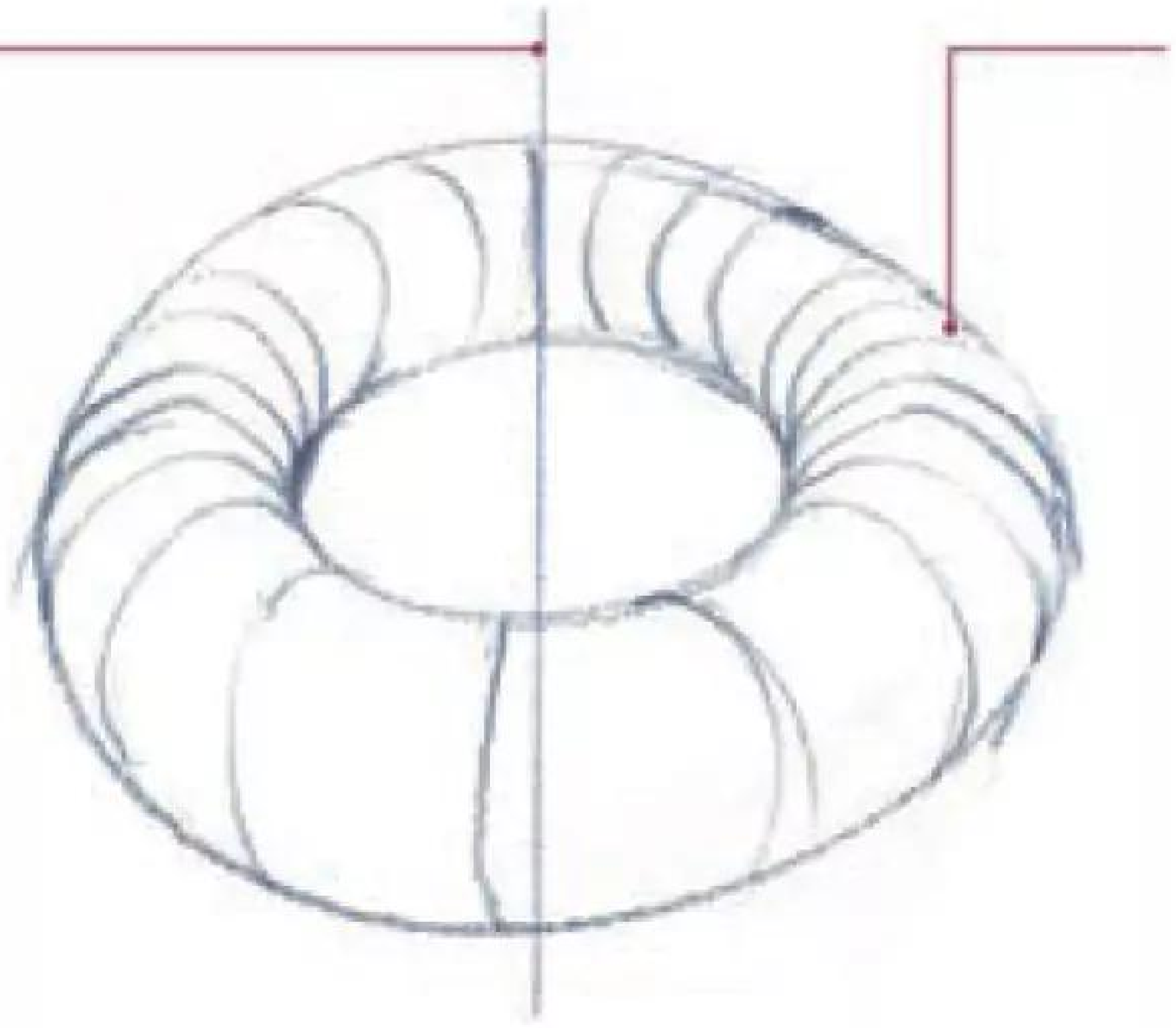
▲ Elliptical shading
The curved lines of elliptical shading helps to volumize the round orb shape of the apple.



▲ Planar shading
The directional lines of planar shading helps to describe the angles of the planes.

Creating form with lines

Artists can use lines to express volume by drawing around the form, following its curves and planes. With a sensitive response to form, an artist can represent the form of anything they wish.



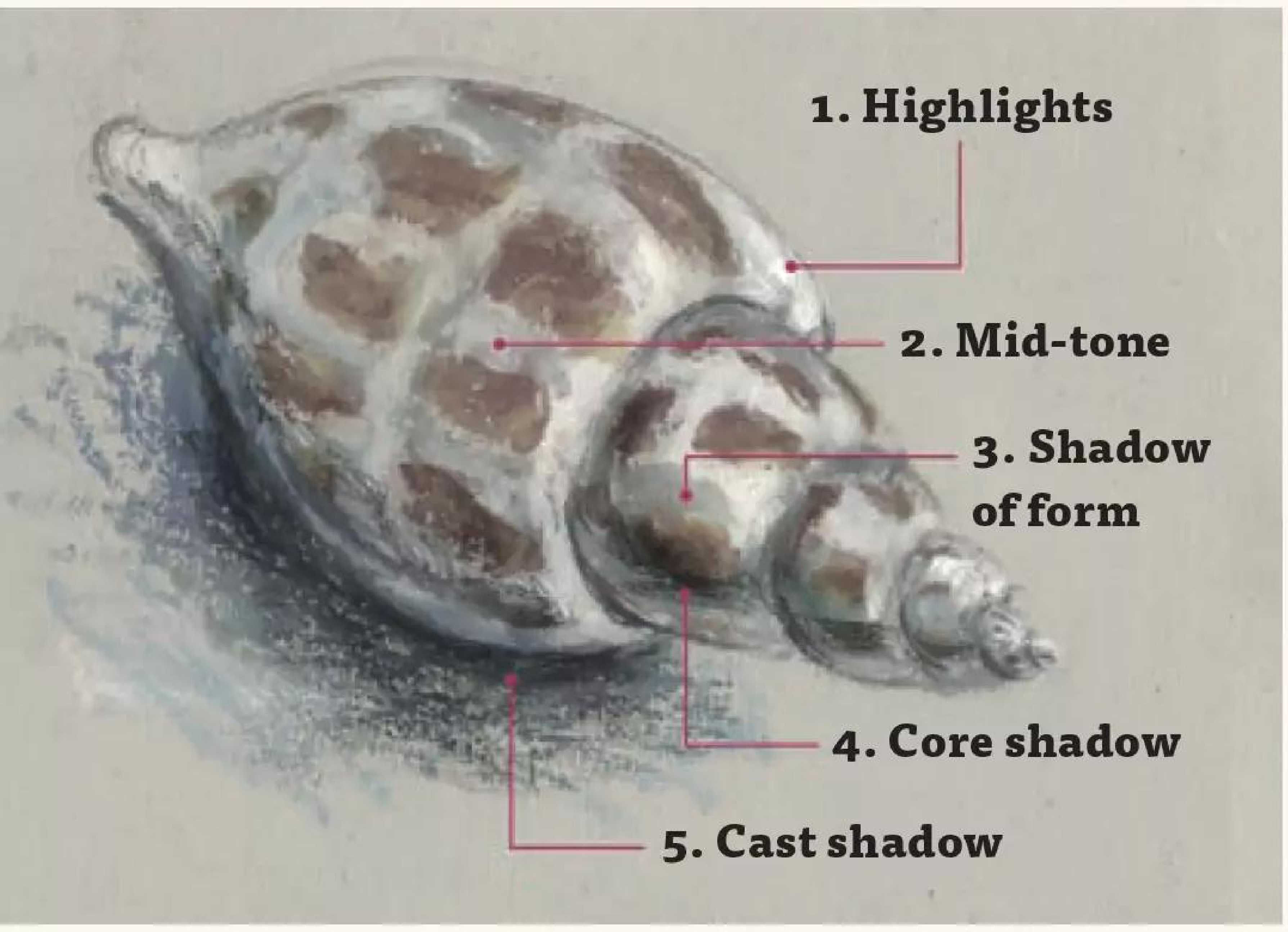
The turning point
Where the surface is directly in front of the viewer's eyes and the contour line appears as a straight line.

Compression
Foreshortening creates an illusion that the contour lines are bunching up in compression as the form turns to face the eye. At this point, the ellipse contours are at their most open and roundest.

◄ Wrapping lines around an object
Create the illusion of form without using light and shade by wrapping contour lines around forms. Notice how they alternates in direction on either side of the turning point.

Creating form with tone

In addition to suggesting light, tonal shading also reveals the appearance of form. Tonal shading can be added in a host of different ways, from cross-hatching to a loose wash. I have a personal preference for loose shading rather than the more mechanical cross-hatching.



1. The **highlights** are the areas on an object where the light hits the object.

2. Mid-tones lie between the shadow and light values. They are lighter and brighter in pigment than everything in the darker shadow family.

3. The **shadow of form** is the part of an object that lies on the opposite side of the light source. It tends to have a softer edge than the cast shadow as the light reaches around the surface.

4. The **core shadow** is a dark band of shadow created by light reflected onto an object from the surface it sits on. There is no core shadow on the moon's dark side because there is no surface for light to bounce on in space.

5. Cast shadows bring drama to a study and prevent the subject from floating on the page. Drawing shadows requires thought about the light, and cast shadows are no exception; pinpoint it in your mind and even draw an arrow on your page. How dark depends on the strength of the light source and the tonal value of the surface the object is sitting on. □

Modelling with line

Drawing borrows the term ‘modelling’ from sculpture to refer to any graphic technique that creates the appearance of three dimensions. Form can be suggested by creating a zigzag movement of the pencil to create the parallel lines of hatching. Strokes can be created in any direction. Those that follow the direction of the form will sculpt it and create the illusion of solidity.

In this tutorial, contour hatch modelling is used to emphasise the tactile three-dimensional volume of the cactus’s smooth bulbous segments, which is contrasted with their fearsome defensive spikes. Hatching marks bend around the curvature of the segments, following the optical effects provided by a direct light and giving the form shadow; they also provide cast shadow.

Cacti can, at first, appear an intimidating subject. They can be unforgiving in getting their proportions right compared with the subtleties of sketching a face. Cacti are both organic and geometric simultaneously, following the mathematical laws of nature. The volume of the cacti’s structures is evident through the natural contours surrounding them. I started from the crown and let my drawing grow organically by sketching shape to shape, working my way down to the base of the plant. I never feel restricted by my initial sketch and change and adapt it widely, particularly at the beginning.

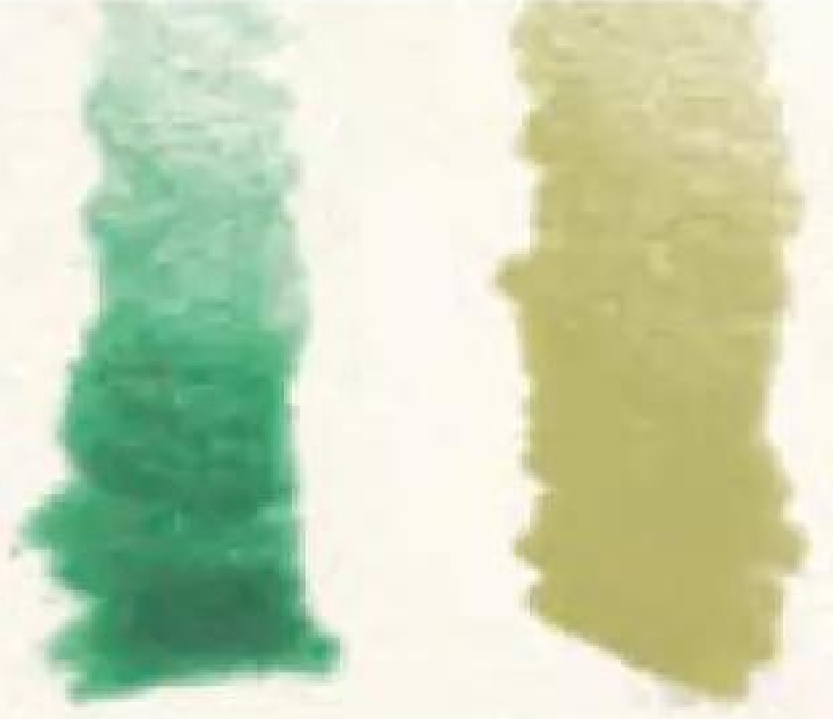
Ball cactus

Various marks are employed to capture the different qualities of the contrasting smooth bulbous waxy skin and sharp spines. First, sharpen the pencil each time before trying to capture the sharpness of the spines, and then – when the pencil is blunter through use – turn to the ridges to create the shading by making hatching marks.

1 Initially, concentrate on giving the cacti smooth, round shapes and sketch out their proportions. Use the natural compass hinges in your wrist and elbow to create a fluid scaffolding. This will be the initial architecture on which to hang the detail. Pick a neutral shade that will recede behind the second pencil work.

TIP

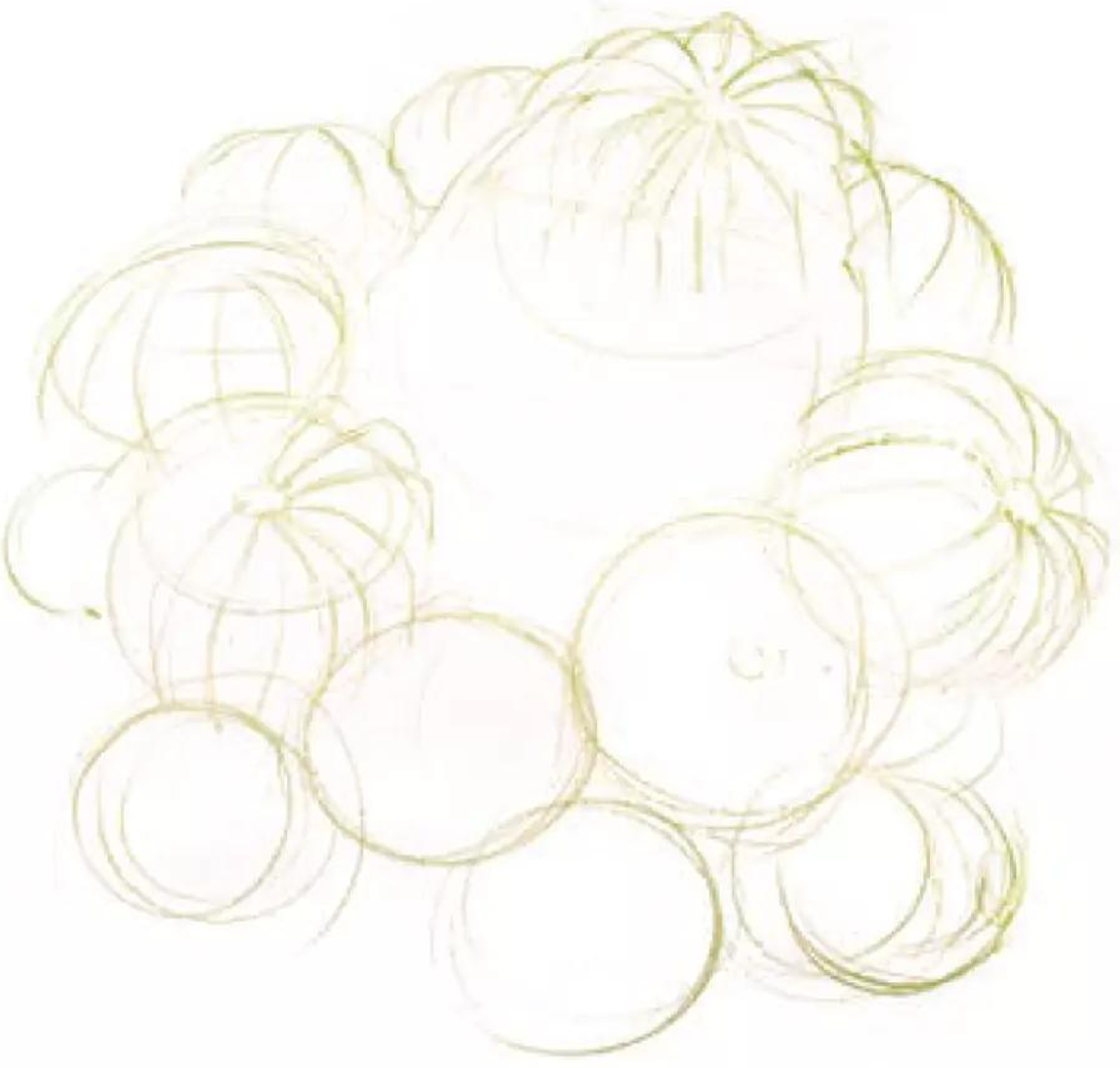
I often create the initial light underlying framework of the drawing in a lighter or different shade of colouring pencil.

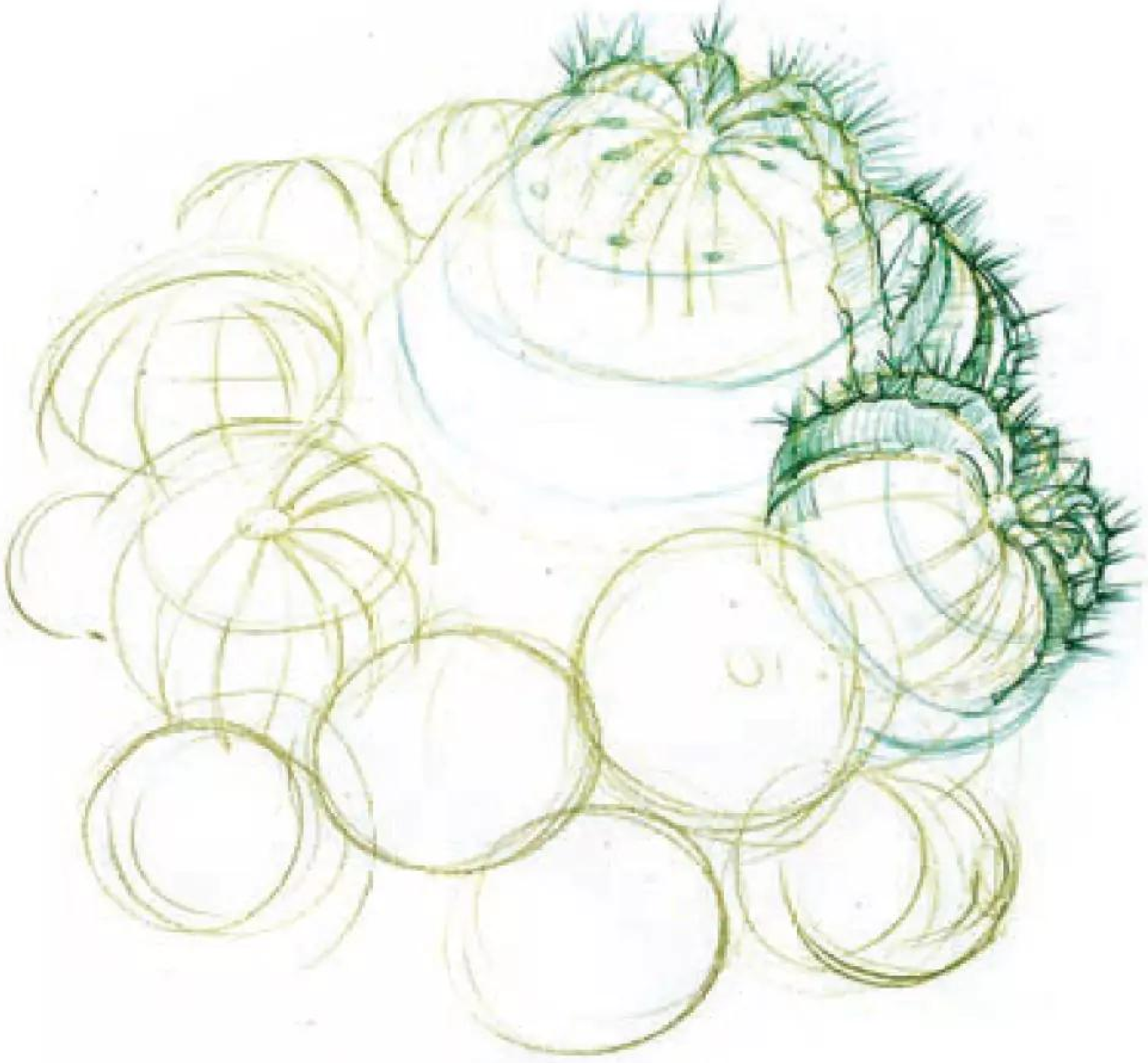


MATERIALS

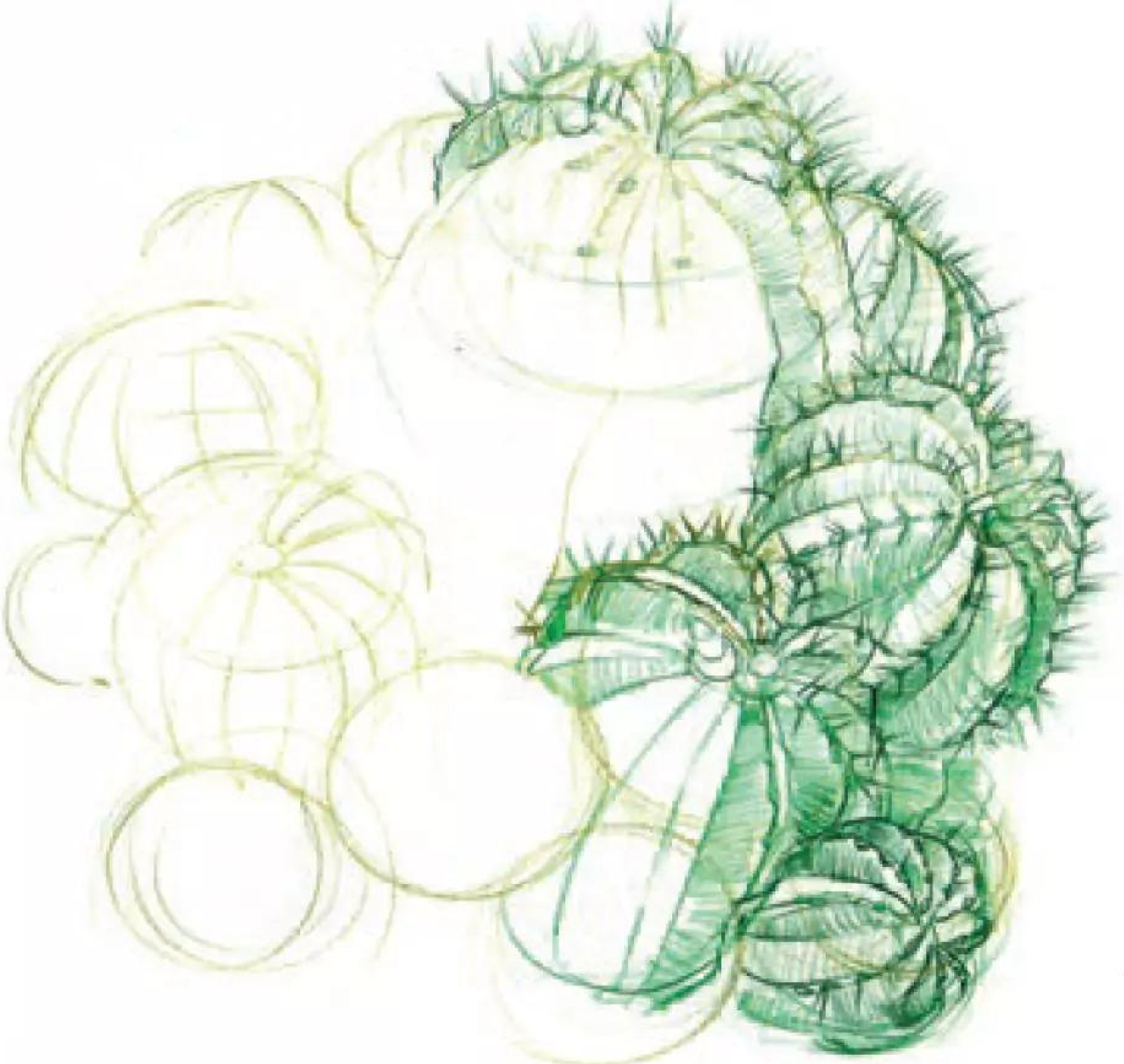
- Artist’s quality colouring pencils (see swatches above)
- Cartridge (drawing) paper or sketchbook
- Sharpener
- Putty eraser

Ball cactus *(Parodia magnifica)*
Cacti are a member of the succulent plant family. They have adapted to grow in arid climates, with little rainfall and plenty of sunshine. Their prickles turn them into an unattractive meal for many animals. The stems are green to photosynthesize food for the plant because spines can’t do this. Cacti stems and ridges expand to store water for periods when rain is sparse. Most plants lose water every day through their leaves in a process called transpiration. Cacti, however, undertake this process at night when it is cooler to reduce the amount of water that is lost.





2 Next, sketch from the top downwards in a stronger, darker colour related to the cactus shade. Render the areas almost completely before moving onto new unfamiliar territory. Try to pull the ridges out from the orbs by creating directional shading, using hatching marks that follow the form.

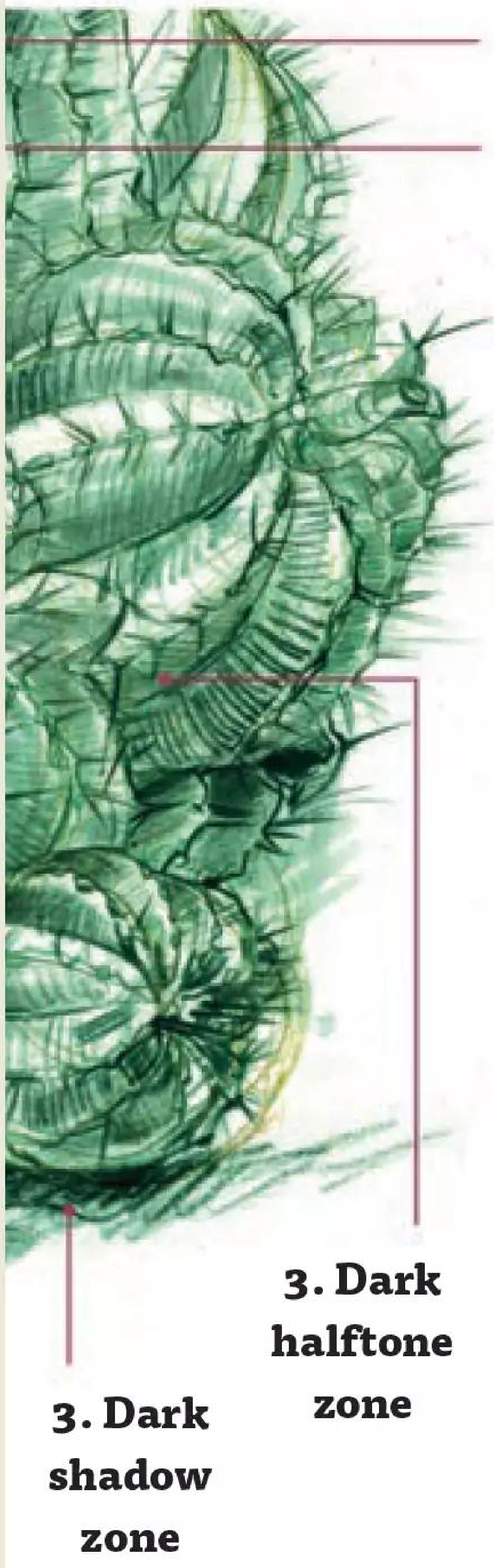


3 Create flick marks to capture the sharp spines on top of the ridges, which are grouped in tiny clusters. You can sketch a small arrow in the corner of the page to indicate the light source and ensure all the elements in the study are affected uniformly by it.

4 Keep going until you feel that the drawing is complete. I sometimes leave the sketch a little unfinished to leave some white space, allowing the sketch to breathe. □

CREATING ZONES OF LIGHT AND SHADOWS

Separate your study into four basic tonal zones, based on the lights and shadows created by a single direct source of light. In graduating order, these should include a light zone, a light halftone zone, a dark halftone zone and a dark shadow zone.

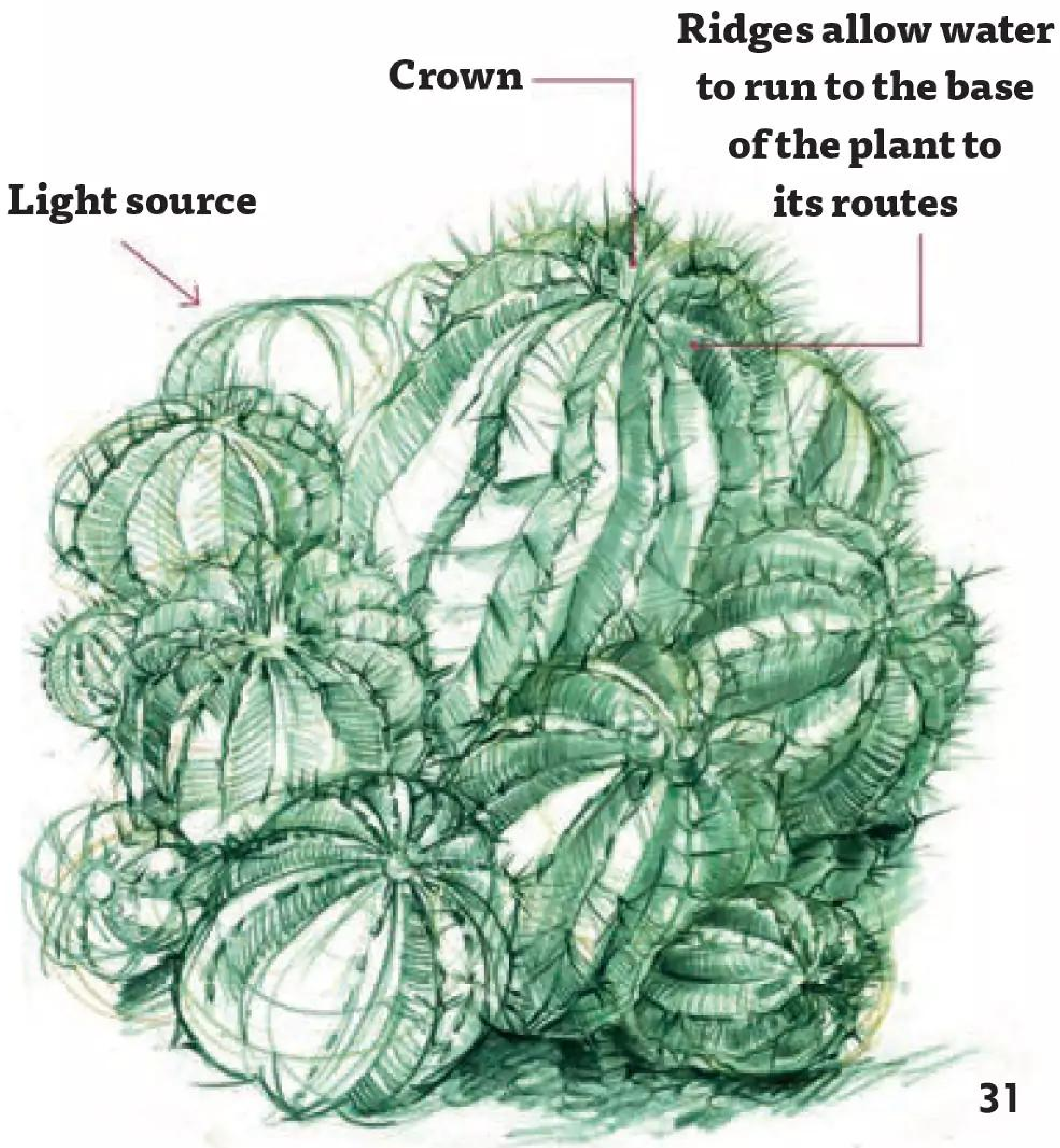


1. These parts of the form face the light source directly and are the brightest.

2. These are the transitional areas where the form initially turns away from the light. It is a light mid-tone value between light and dark.

3. Darker shading suggests planes more hidden from the light source on the underside of the cactus.

4. These zones have the darkest values, where the artist can really accentuate the mark, such as at the base.


Light source
Crown
Ridges allow water to run to the base of the plant to its routes

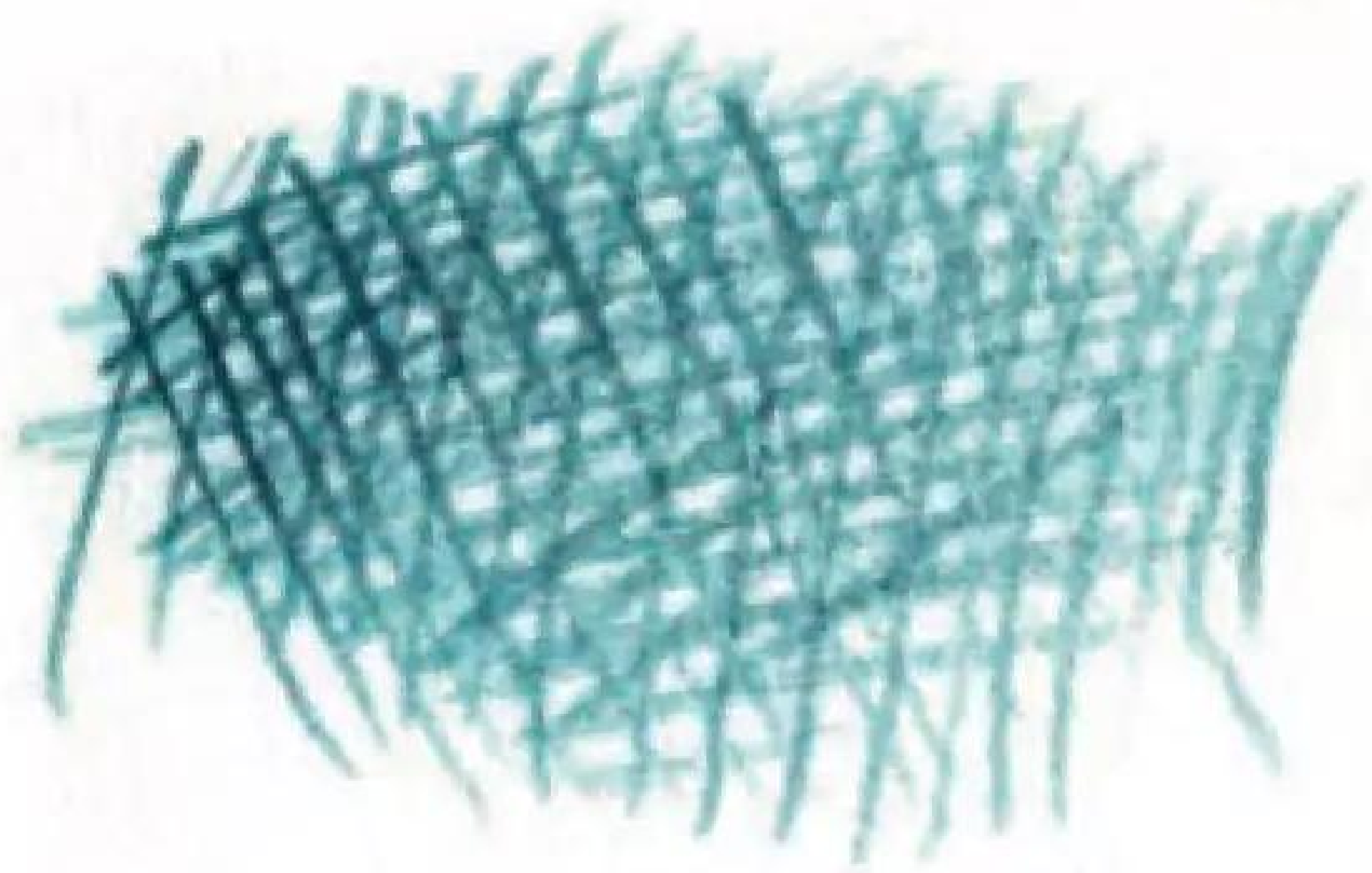
White
Warm Grey Dark
Black

Colour with pencils

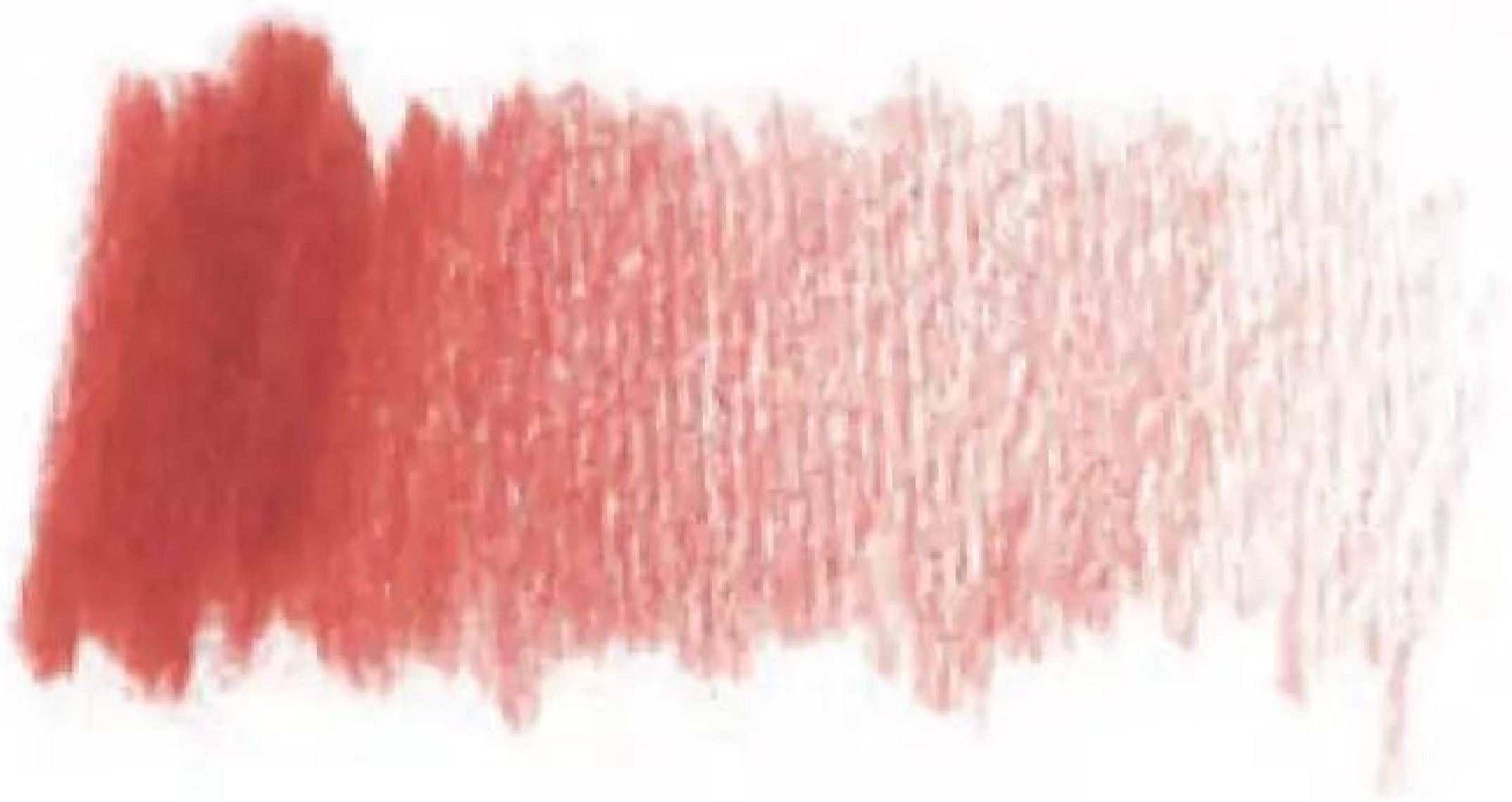
Colouring pencils were the first drawing material I started doodling with as a child. They remain close to my heart as a highly versatile, transportable and satisfying medium. There is a meditative quality to drawing with colouring pencils, plus there are no drying times to worry about. The colour of any single colouring pencil is unlikely to match the hue you are observing. The answer is to create the desired shade by mixing a combination of colours through layering them. At the heart of this technique lies a good understanding of complementary colours, rather than just adding black and my personal approach is to include a generous amount of Ultramarine Blue in the shadows to create an airy spatial quality. You can use a scribbly and scumbling approach with directional shading to shape the planes rather than using mechanical cross-hatching.

HATCHING

An approach that utilizes the tip of the pencil to create parallel lines on your paper is known as hatching. These lines can be vertical, horizontal or angled. Adding lines in different directions creates darker and richer tones – this is cross-hatching.



Cross-hatching
Colouring pencil drawings are built up slowly by layering colours. In crosshatching, the more lines cross over each other, and the harder the pressure is applied, the darker the value becomes.



CREATING A GRADIENT

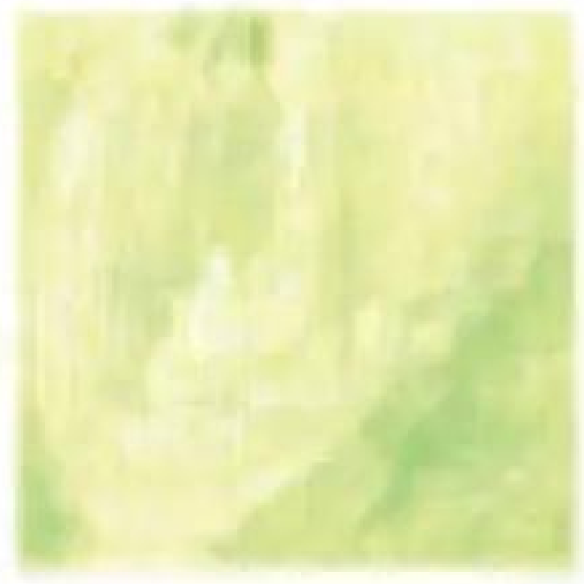
Move your pencil back and forth in one continuous motion on the paper until you cover a small area. Simply lighten the pressure if you want to allow the white paper to show through.

LAYERING AND SCUMBLING

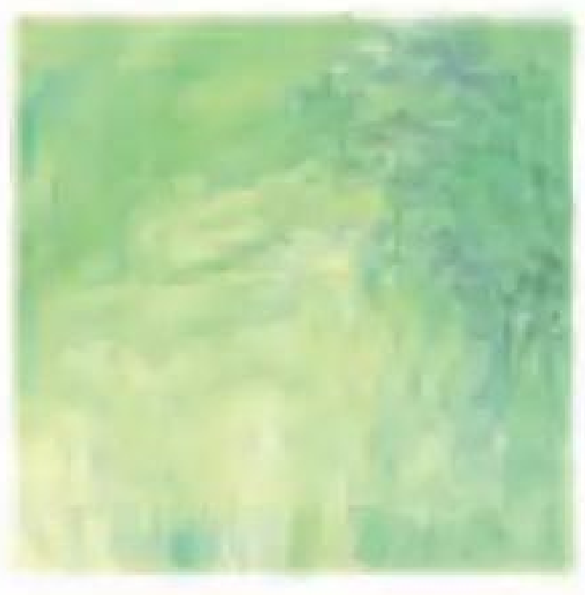
Don't feel limited by the number of colours in your pencil set. You can create more by overlaying different colours to produce new hues through visual optical mixing on the paper.

Scumbling involves making a series of tiny overlapping circular motions of varying sizes to create shade. I try to vary my marks to create visual interest and combine merging layers, almost smearing them by using either the tip or the side of the pencil tip.

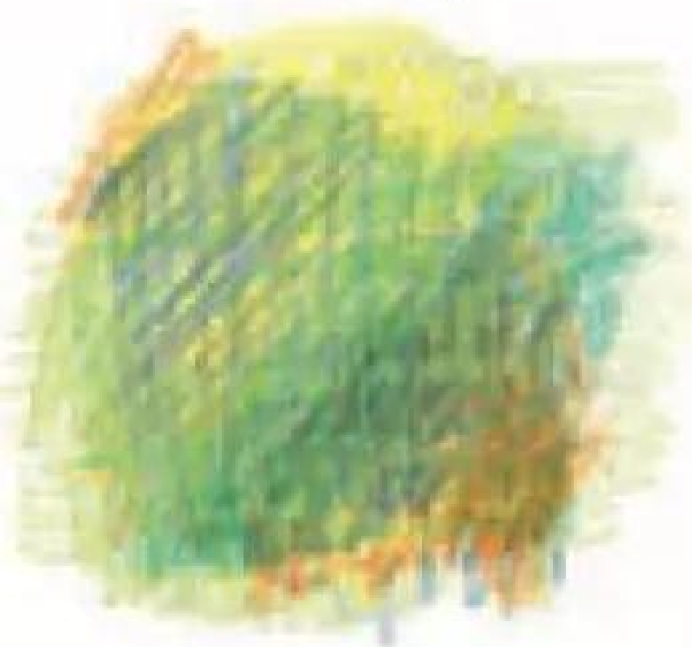
Yellow base colour



Green layered on top

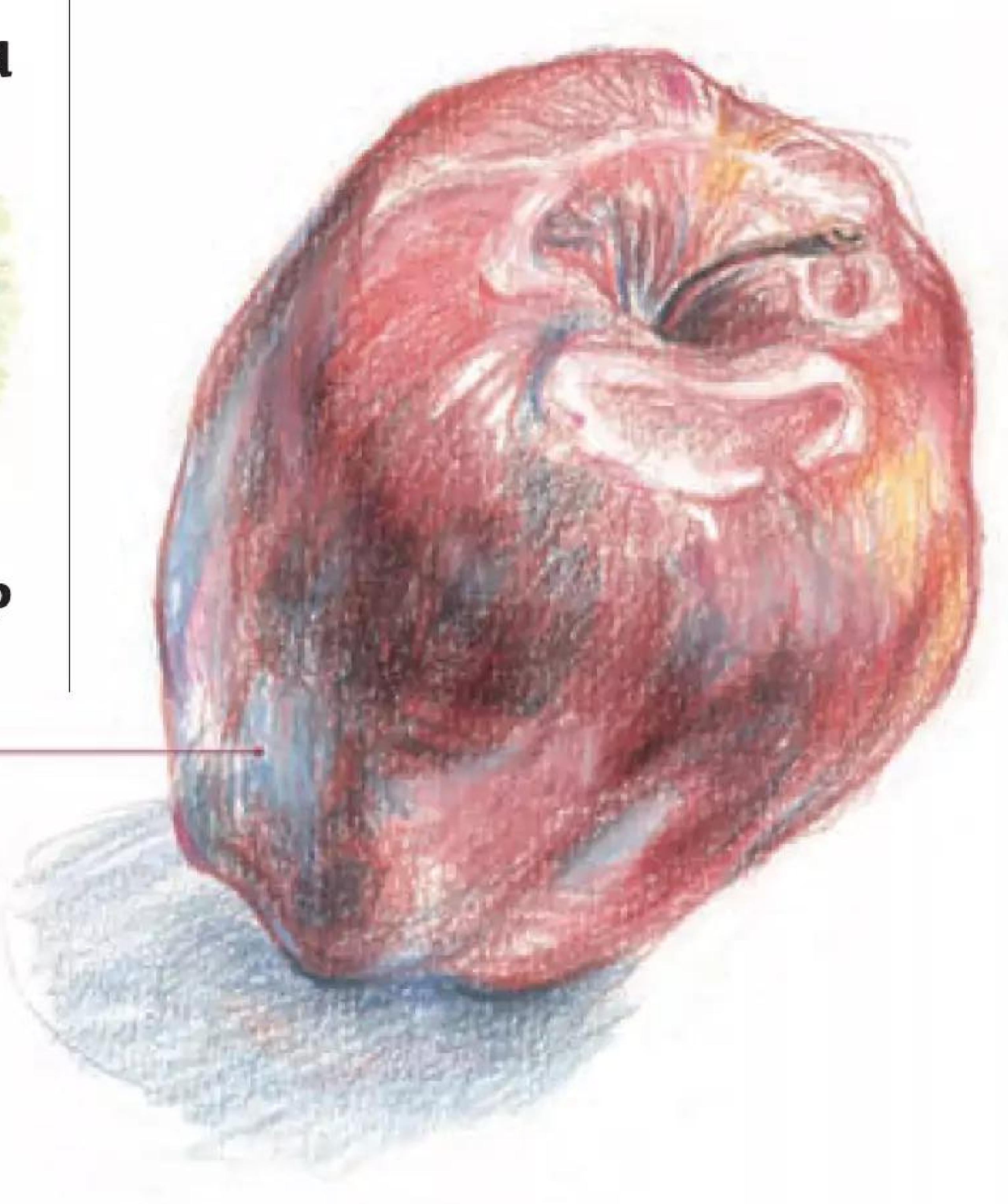


Blue layered on top

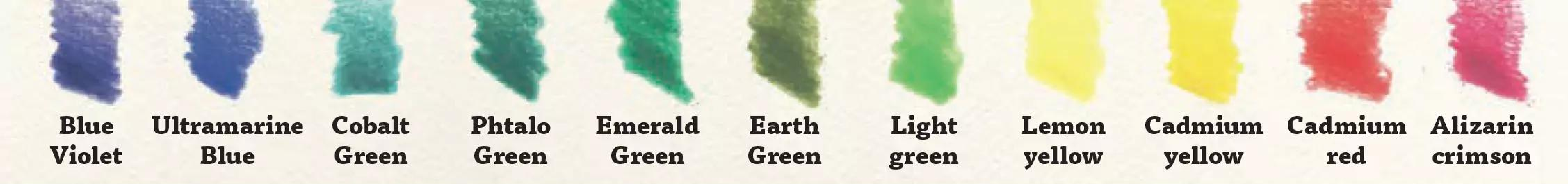


Orange layered on top

Giving form
A red apple created with a combination of elliptical and planar shading.



Reflected light can be added with a white watercolour pencil, which has a greater covering ability than a colouring pencil


Blue Violet
Ultramarine Blue
Cobalt Green
Phtalo Green
Emerald Green
Earth Green
Light green
Lemon yellow
Cadmium yellow
Cadmium red
Alizarin crimson

Chiaroscuro apples

Apples have a long history in art, from appearing as a symbol of temptation in the garden of Eden to representing signs of autumn. They are an accessible and enjoyable subject to tackle in colouring pencils..

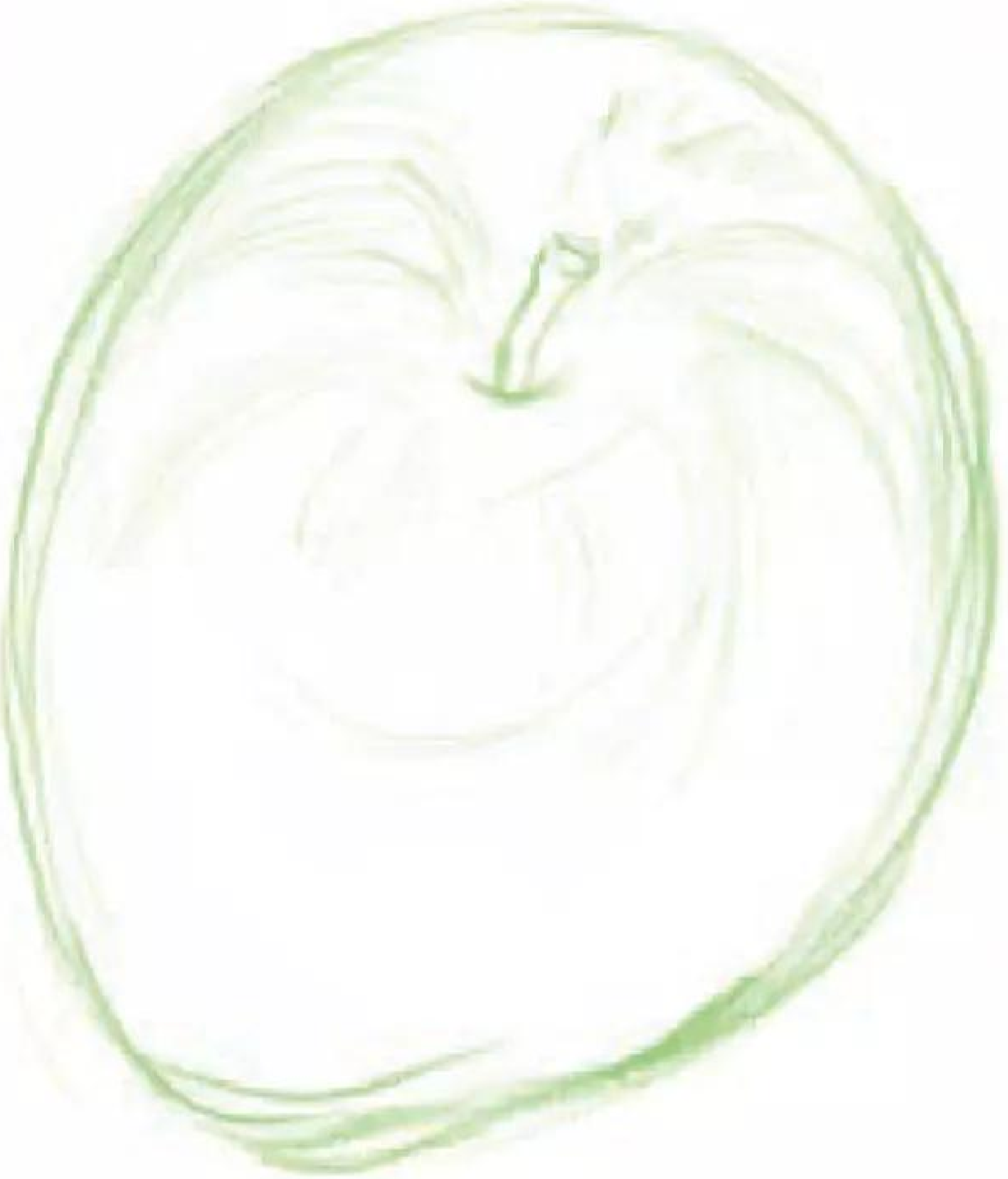
Apple

(Malus domestica)

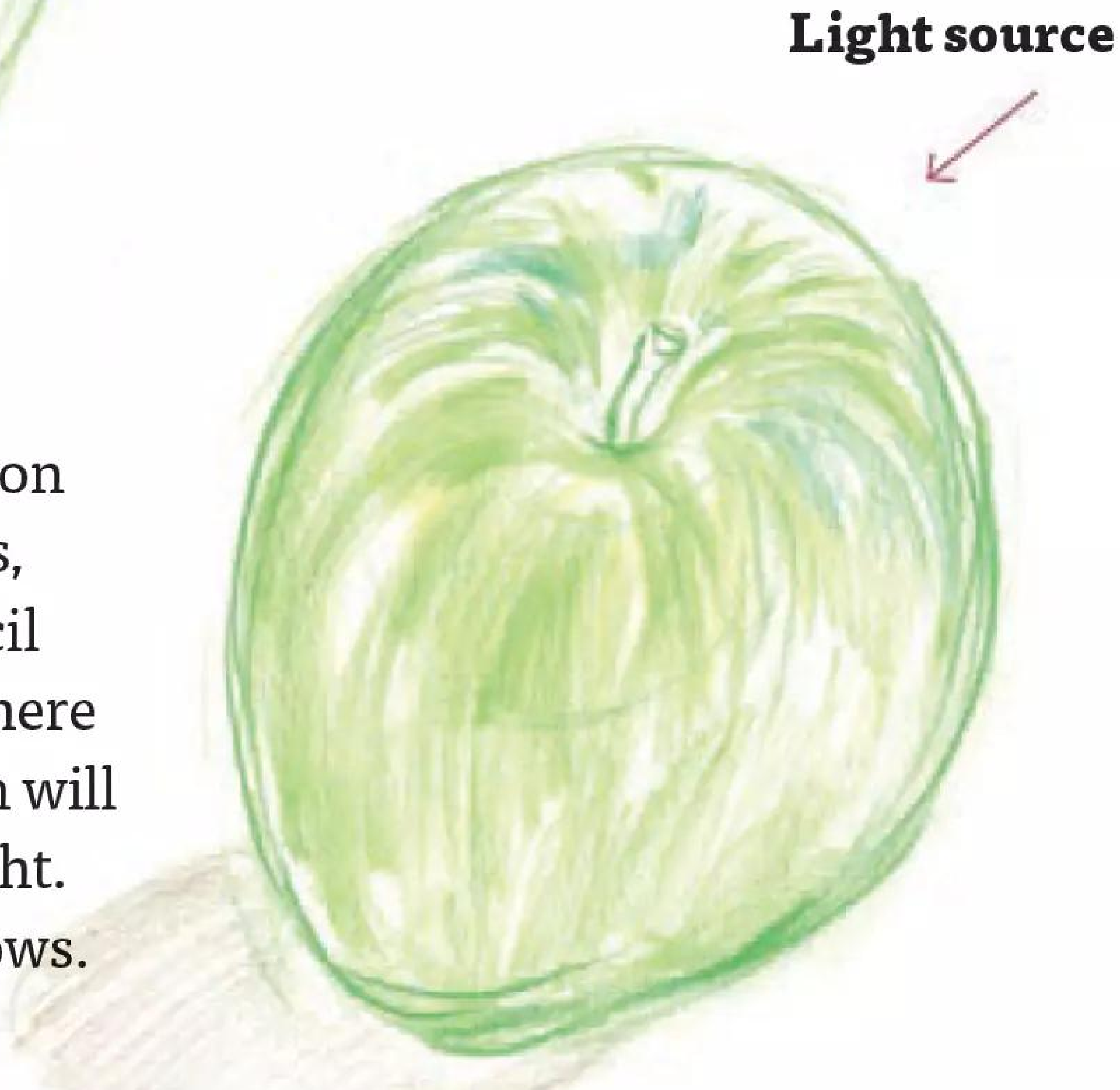
The first apples grew in Central Asia in southern Kazakhstan, the home of its wild ancestor (Malus sieversii), which has similar fruit with a diameter of up to 2¾in (7cm). Apples have been cultivated for thousands of years in Asia and Europe, and European colonists introduced them to North America.

MATERIALS

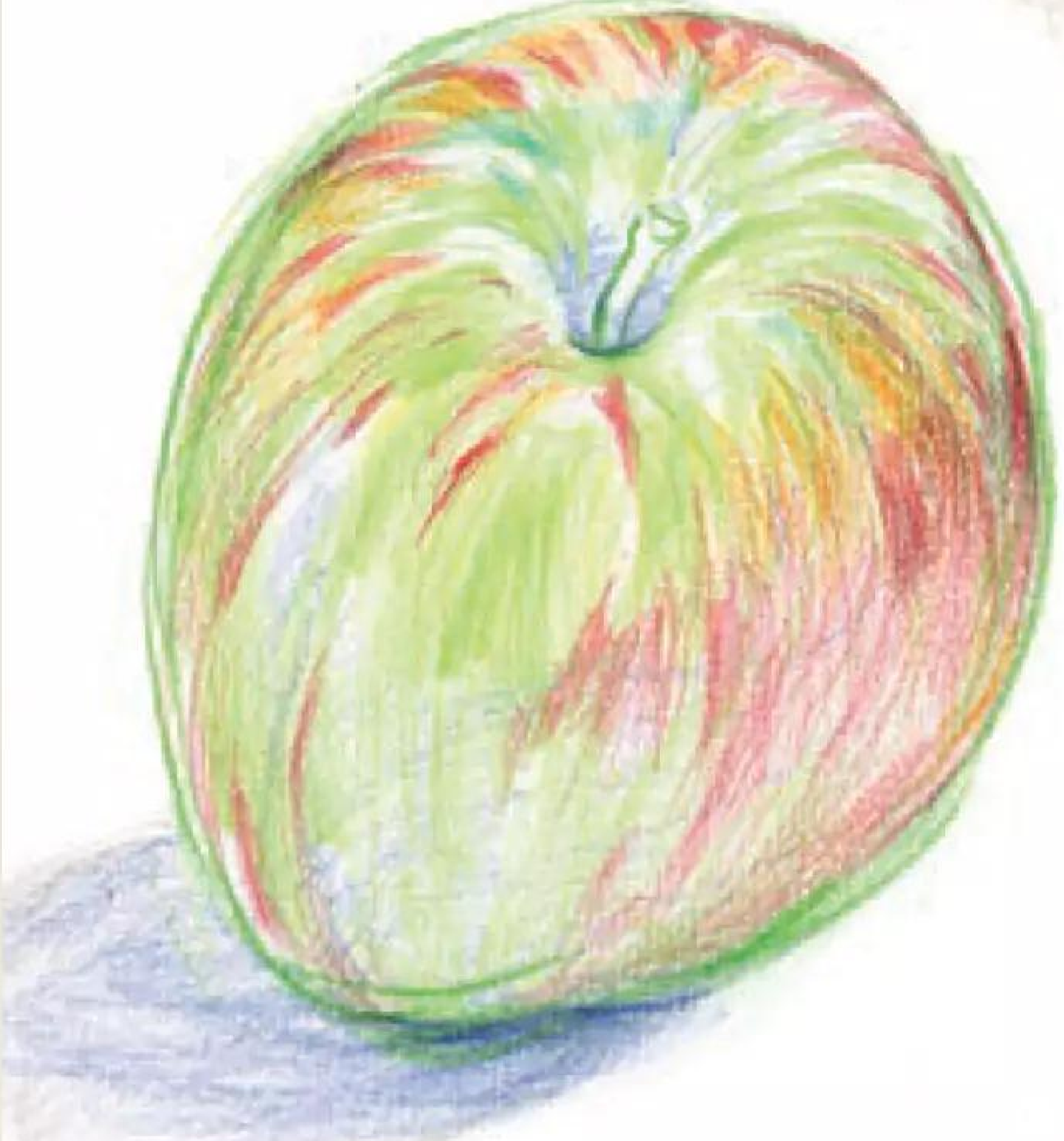
- Artist's quality colouring pencils (see swatches above right)
- Cartridge (drawing) paper or sketchbook
- Sharpener
- Putty eraser



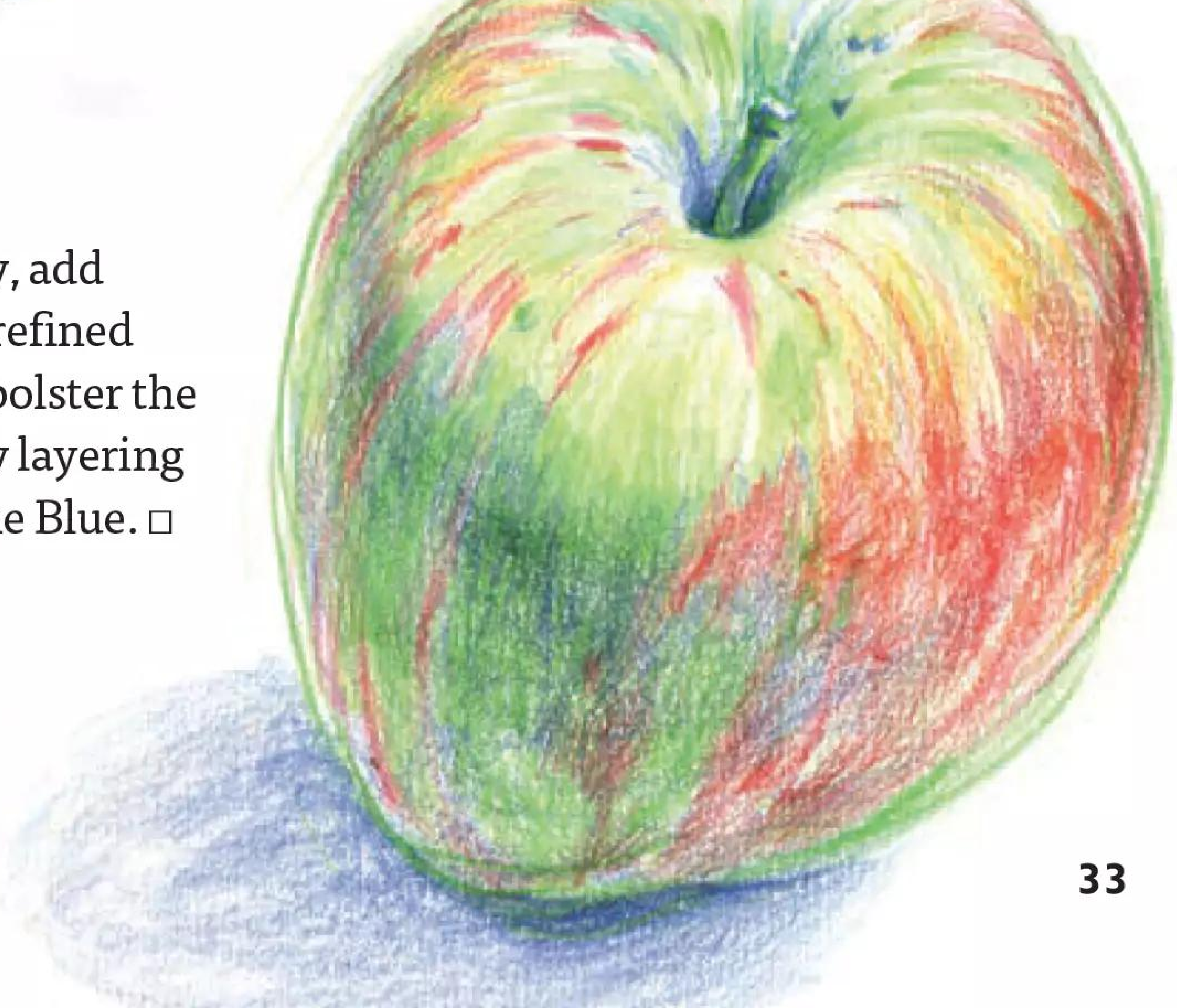
1 Begin by drawing the main shapes with the dominant colour of the subject, light green, and then start to volumise the form with a few elliptical marks.


Light source

2 Next, add a layer of lemon yellow and more greens, switching between the pencil shades. Leave some gaps where there are red patches, which will keep them vibrant in the light. Observe the light and shadows.



3 Aim to put the colours where they belong, following the apple to get the appropriate tones and shape. Use a range of reds and wrap them around the sphere of the apple, coaxing it from the paper. Don't forget to follow the areas of light and shadows, including in the cast shadow.



4 Finally, add more refined detail and bolster the shadows by layering Ultramarine Blue. □

Colour with watercolours

Watercolour is both an accessible and portable medium to use. The lightness and simplicity of the materials required – a paint tin, water, paper and a few brushes – means you can carry your art kit anywhere. Watercolour paints are my go-to medium for staining drawings to bring them to life. There is pleasure in watercolour painting that comes from overlapping translucent washes that glow with a unique, vibrant luminosity as light passes through the paint and is reflected on the paper.

DRAWING WITH BRUSHES

I try to let my brush marks show in the final work. Life is in the brushstroke and has as much personality as handwriting. The artist's objective is not to create a photographic copy of what you are looking at but an interpretation. Vary your brush marks in relation to the size and quality of the subjects in a drawing to add visual interest.

LUMINOUS COLOURS

To achieve luminous shades, use artist's quality watercolour pencils in conjunction with paint diluted with the clearest water. Watercolour pencils become more vibrant when washes of water are dragged over the top. Both pencils and paint can be used in a free sketching manner or used with less water to create high details.

ROYAL GRAMMA FISH

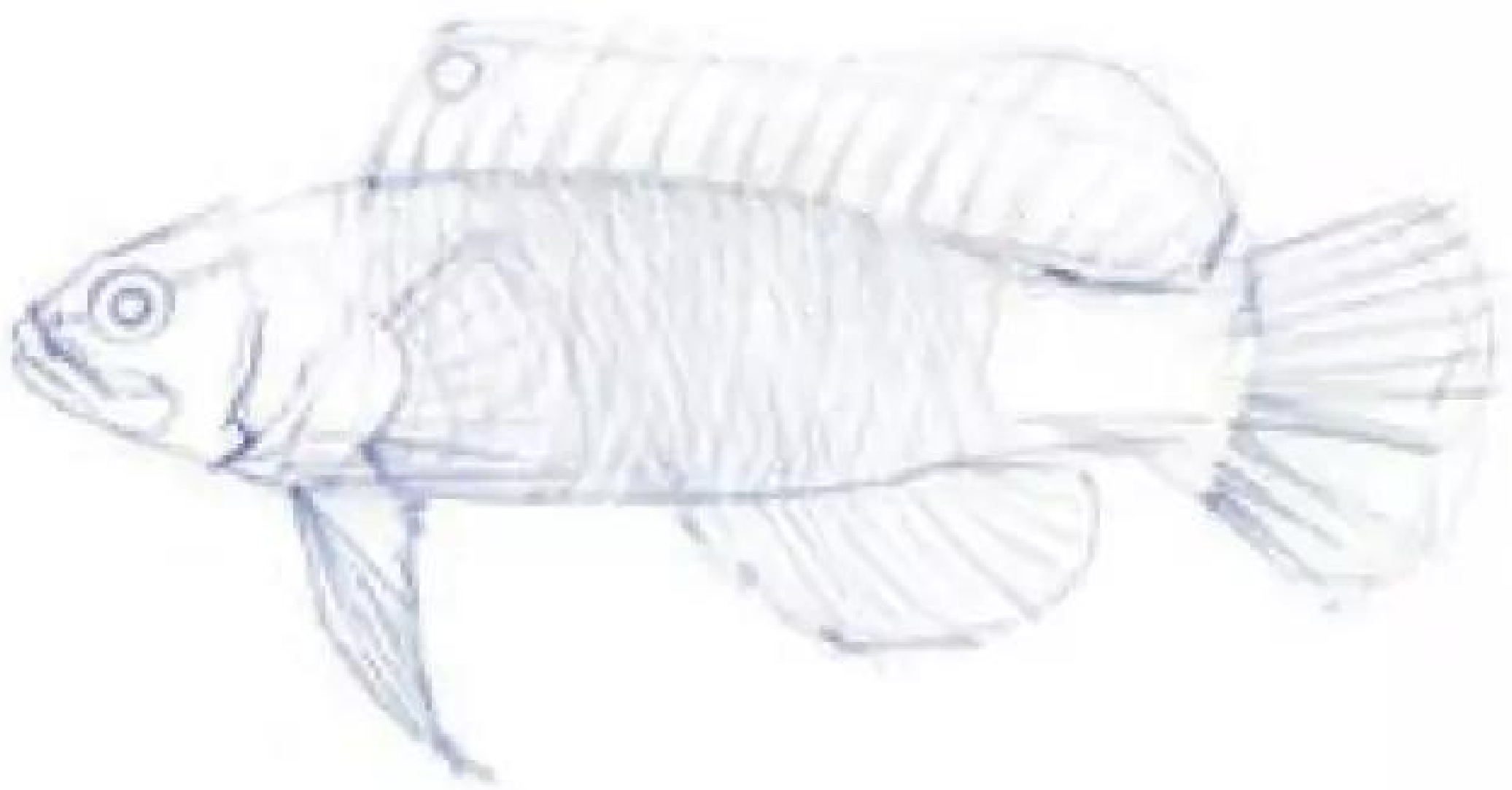
This is a small, brightly coloured Caribbean fish that will require artist's quality pigments to stand a chance of capturing its striking livery.

Royal gramma fish
(Gramma loreto)

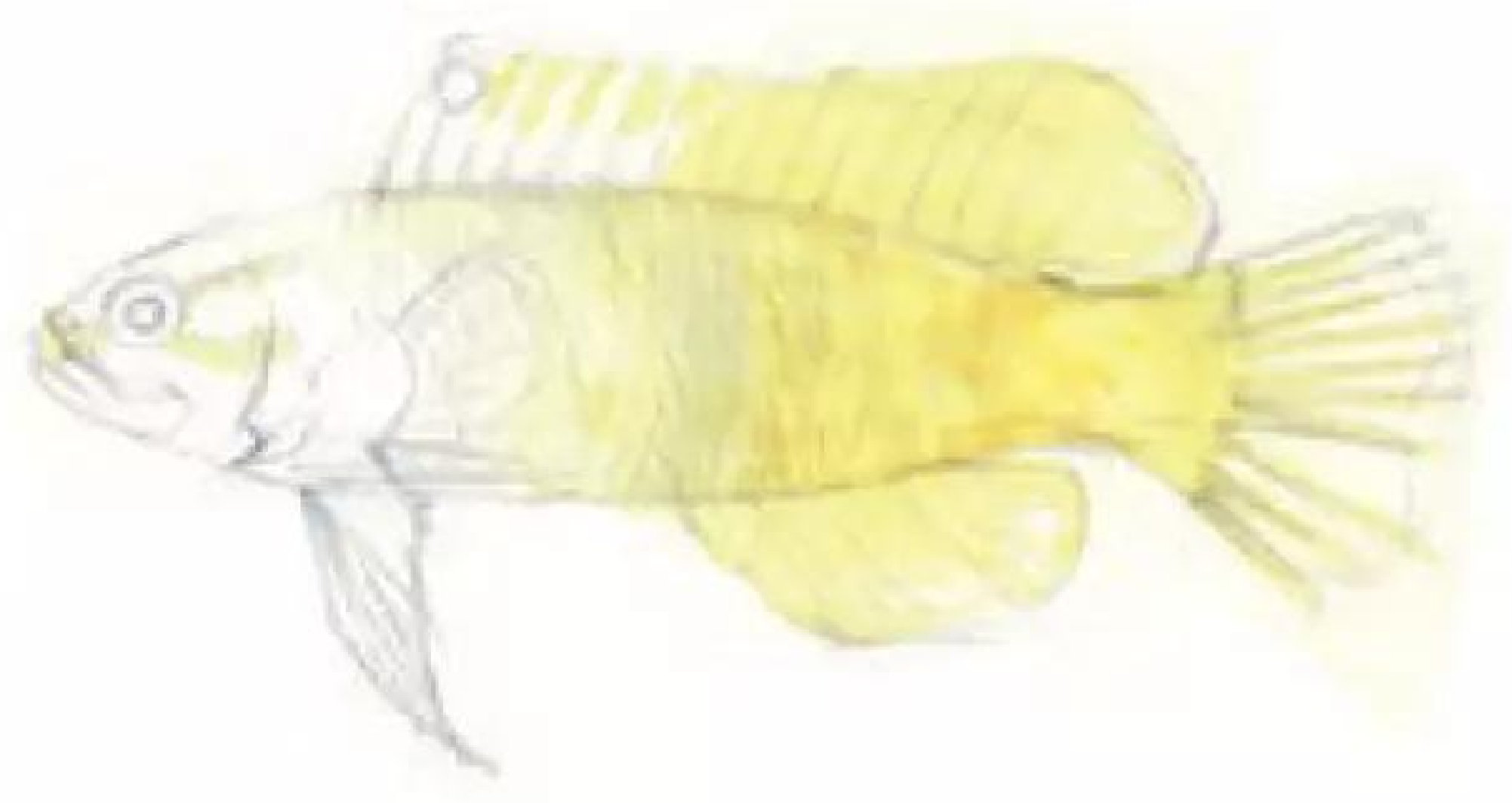
This Grammidae family member is native to the Caribbean's deep-water reefs and dwells in dimly lit and large rockwork caves for hiding. It is a burst of bright complementaries, a violet anterior and yellow posterior.

MATERIALS
FOR BOTH TUTORIALS

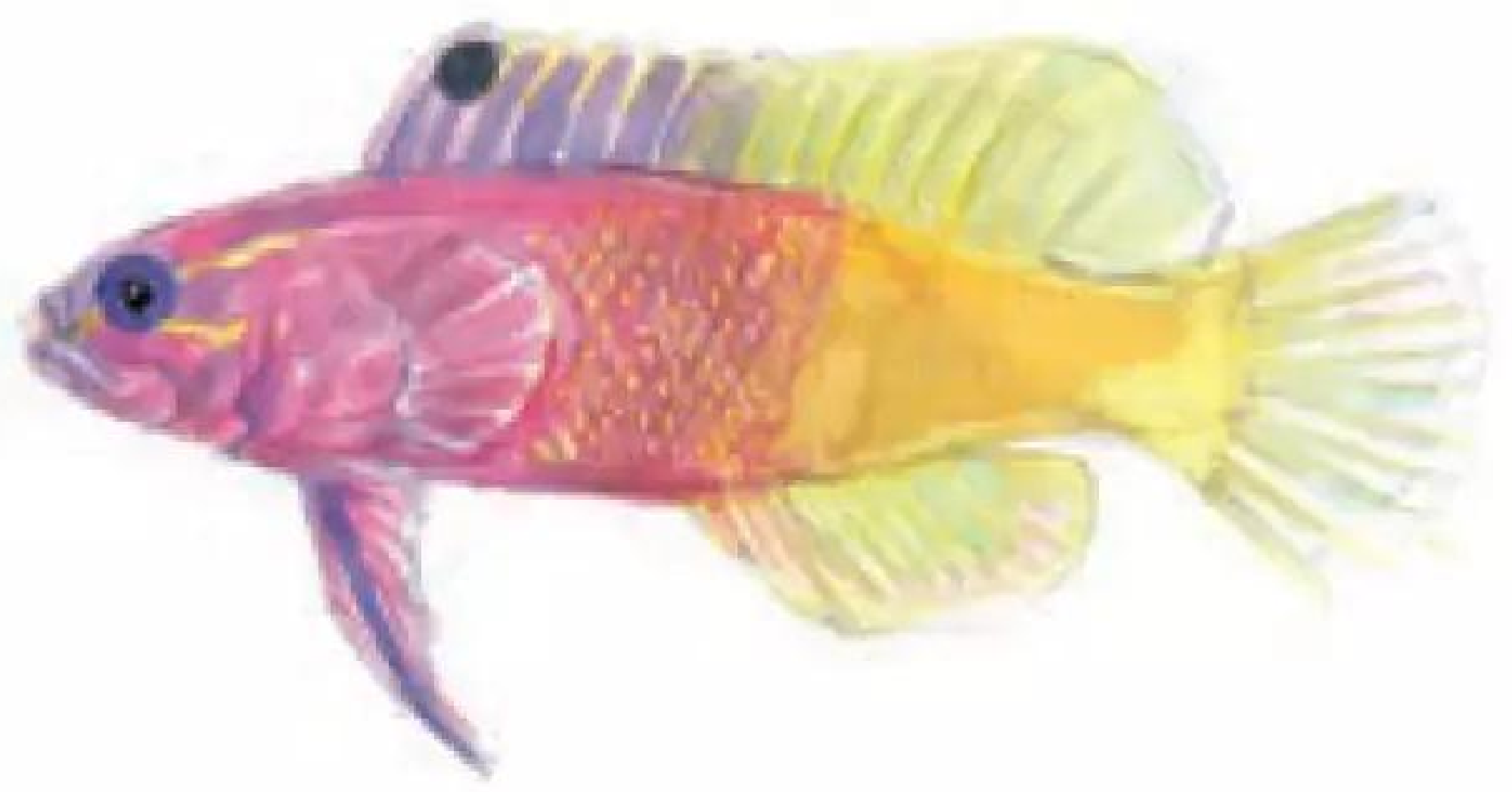
- Indigo (and yellow for the trigger-fish) artist's quality colouring pencil
- Watercolour paints (see swatches below and above right)
- Cartridge (drawing) paper or sketchbook
- Sharpener
- Putty eraser



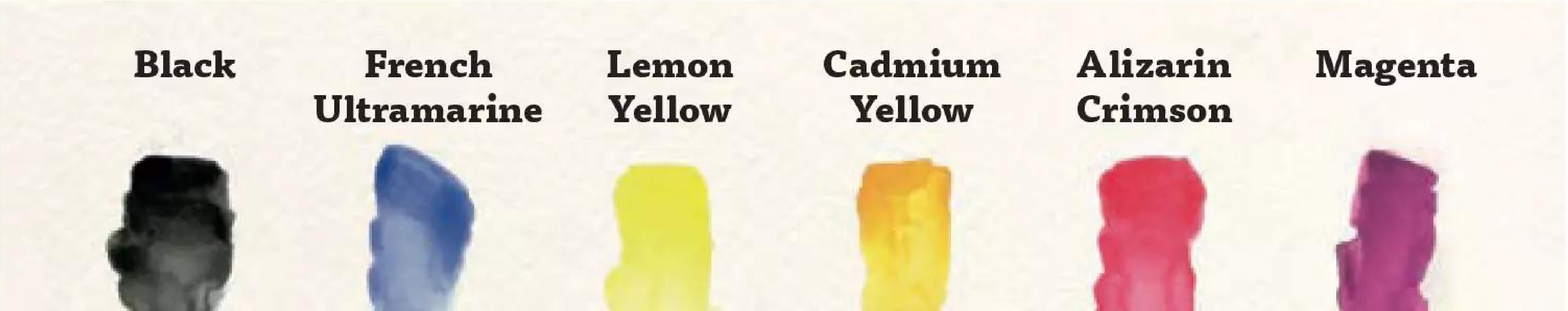
1 Begin by making an initial sketch as accurately as possible; there is no need for shading as this is the work of the watercolour pencils and paint. Use a high quality indigo colouring pencil; the blue line will blend into the background.

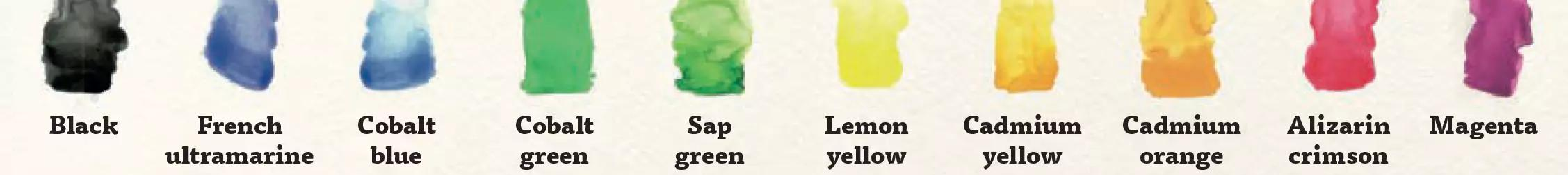


2 Start applying the lightest and most vibrant watercolours to these to achieve bright, glowing pigment stains. Ensuring that your water is clear, combine lemon and Cadmium Yellow to create a graduated wash.



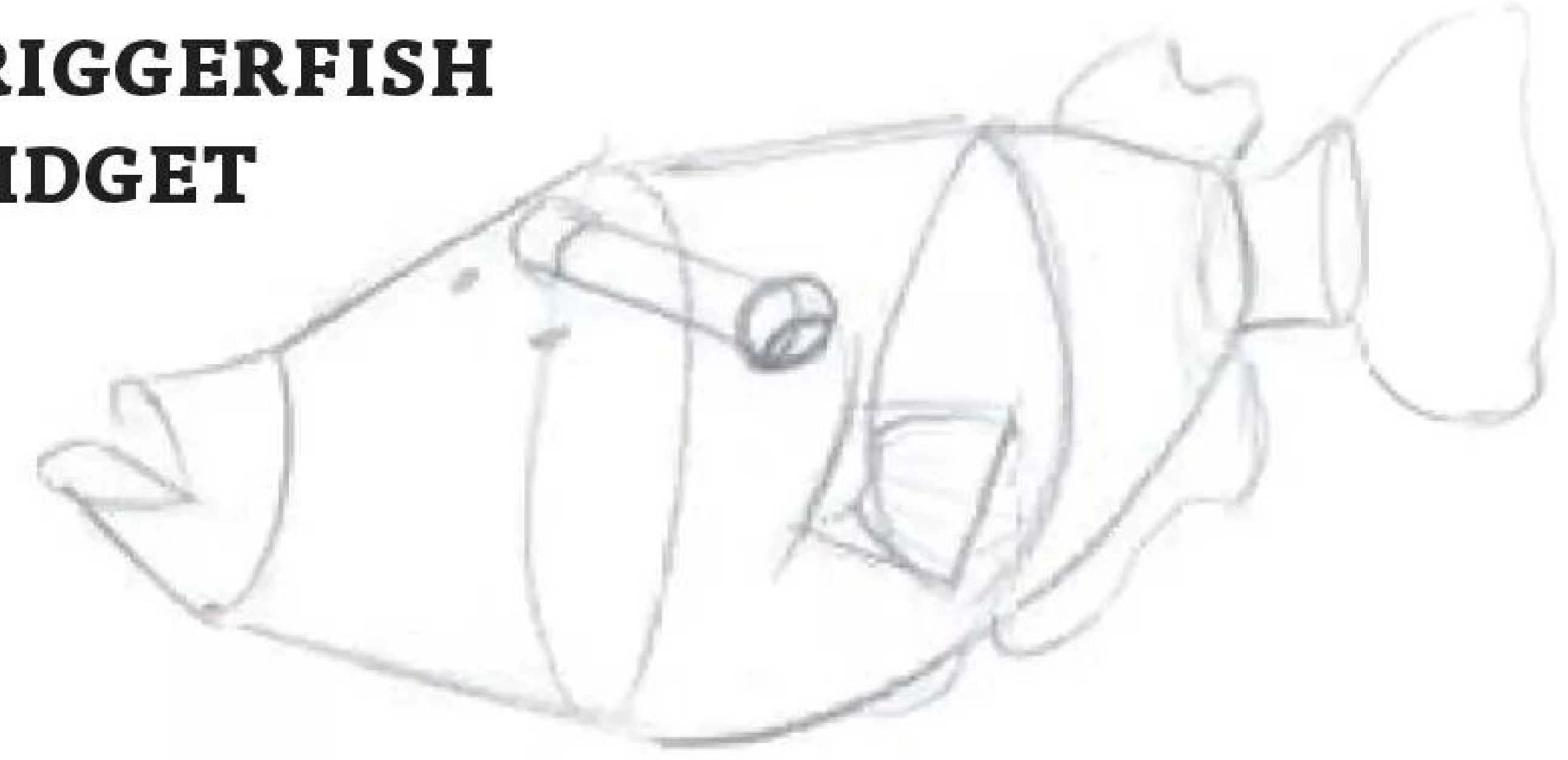
3 Next, mix varying quantities of shades around the magenta spectrum to create purplish hues. Rather than filling in the shapes, draw with the brush. Allow the colours to bleed and create naturalistic happy accident effects.





Picasso triggerfish
(Rhinecanthus assasi)
The Picasso triggerfish, or sometimes lagoon triggerfish, can grow to 12in (30cm) long and is found on Indo-Pacific reefs. The Hawaiian name for this fish is humuhumunukunukuāpuaʻa or just humuhumu for short, meaning ‘triggerfish with a snout like a pig.’

TRIGGERFISH WIDGET

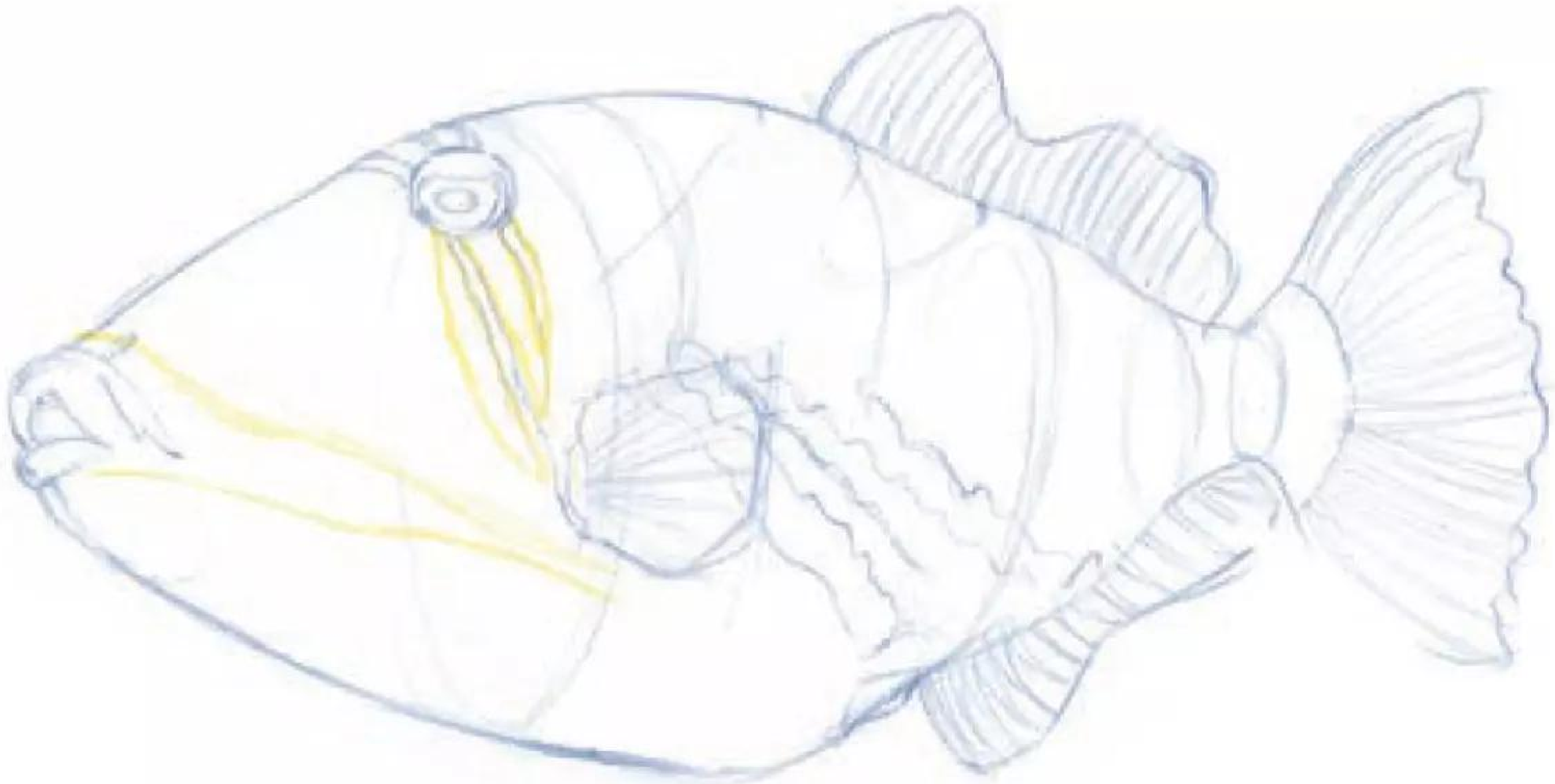


I usually doodle a widget before starting any illustration. This aids in comprehending the three-dimensional framework of my subject, preventing the image appearing too flat and making sure I capture the bulging eyes.

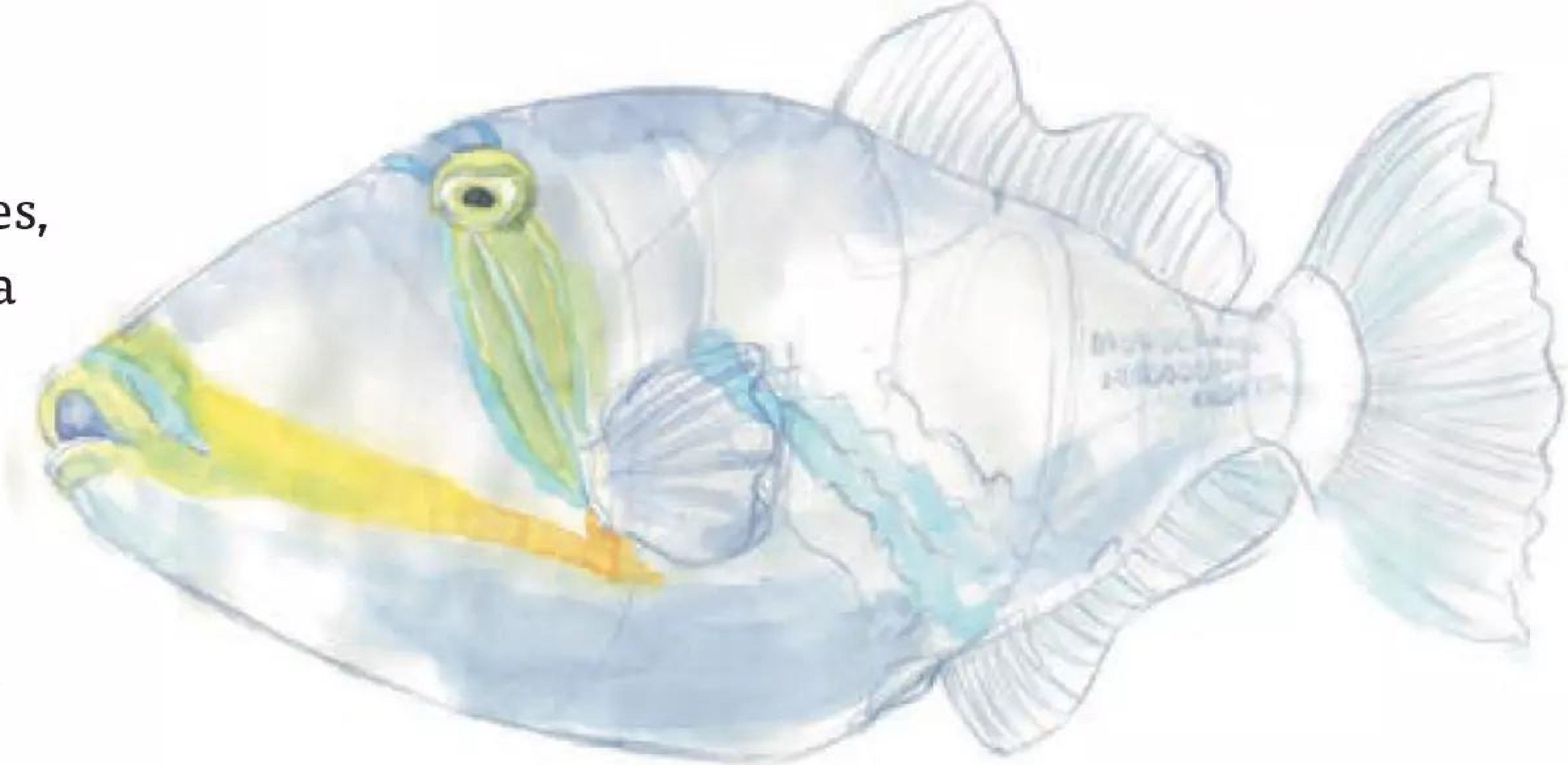
PICASSO TRIGGERFISH

The background colour of this fish’s livery is more subtle, but it provides a foil that makes the other, more exuberant colours pop.

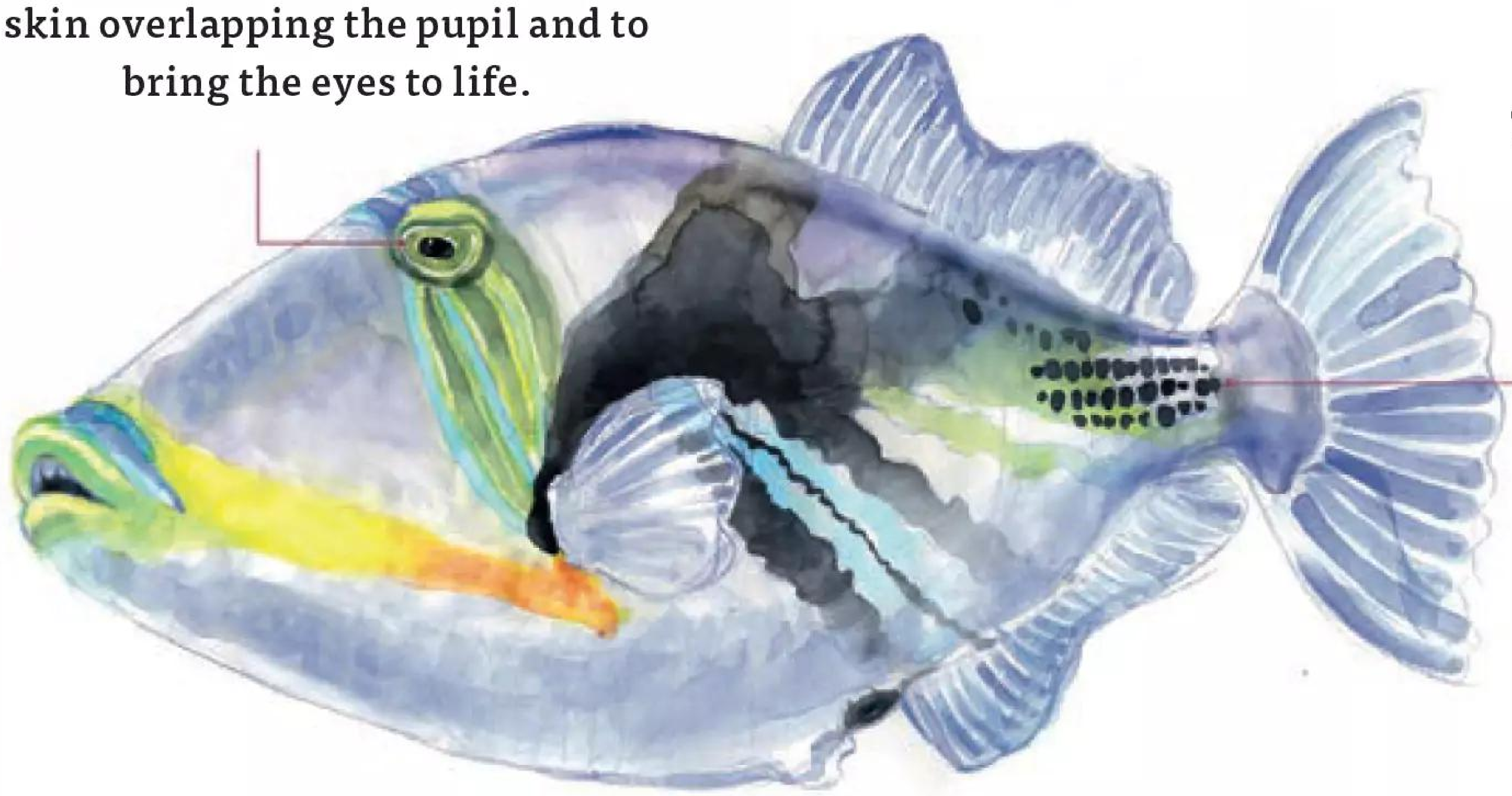
1 Draw the outline and structure of the fish with watercolour pencils in the same colour as the paint you’ll use, so the lines dissolve and disappear when water is added.



2 After brushing on the lightest and brightest shades, use Ultramarine Blue to create a tonal underpainting – it will create a sense of modelling.



Allow for highlights
Leave gaps of white paper around the eyes to create the illusion of skin overlapping the pupil and to bring the eyes to life.



Disruptive spots
These break up the shape of the body to confuse predators.

3 Gradually work from the broad areas to the details using smaller brushes. □

Atmospheric perspective

The earth's atmosphere affects the appearance of distant objects, which is referred to as atmospheric perspective. Things further away are less distinct. Their colour takes on bluish notes as they also become lighter. Observing these effects will aid spatial and moody qualities in your drawings.

TONAL VALUES IN DAYLIGHT COMPOSITIONS

Tones are graduated from high contrast in the foreground to lighter low contrast in the background. Shadows become lighter incrementally as they recede from the viewer in daylight views. In most compositions, the foreground is at the bottom of the page and is closest to the viewer.

Foreground

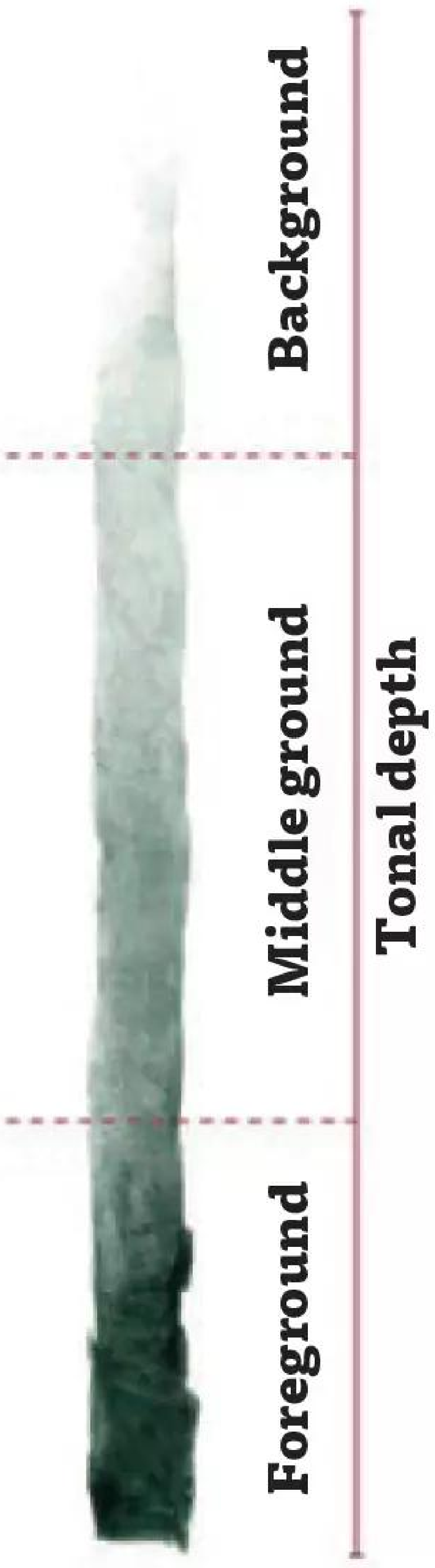
Colours in the foreground are at their strongest in tone and hue. To pull them forward on the page, create accents with significant contrast where the darkest notes play against the light. Add the darkest shadows and include the highest level of detail in this zone.

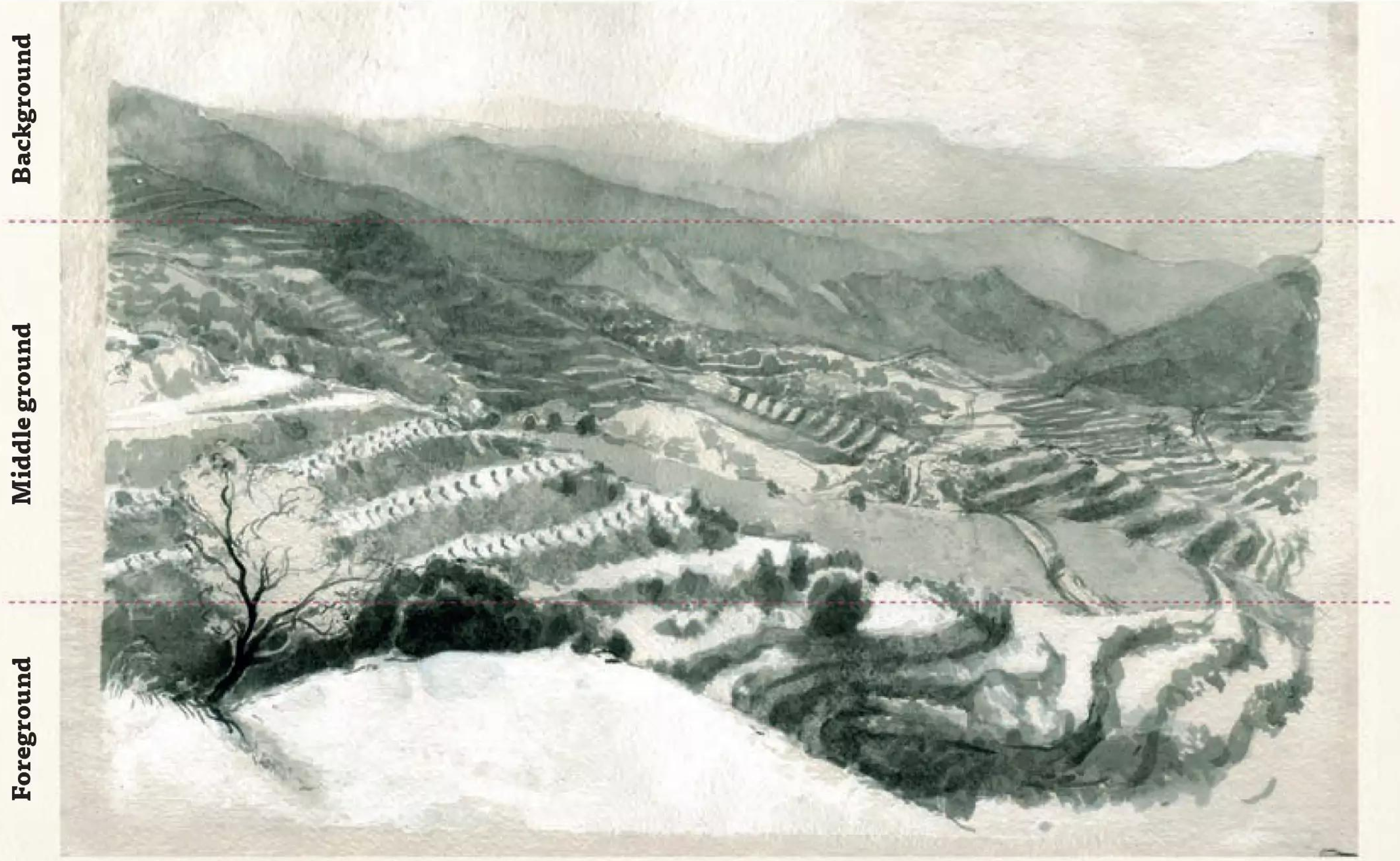
Middle ground

Shadows and dark-coloured objects will appear lighter in the middle ground than in the foreground. Use mid-tone values in the shadows.

Background

Tonal values in the background are at their lightest and closest in contrast. Objects in this zone have less detail and melt into neighbouring forms.





▾ Cypriot mountains
High viewpoints allow you to see for miles. When capturing vistas on this breathtaking scale, it is vital to pay close attention to the tonal values.

COLOUR VALUES IN DAYLIGHT COMPOSITIONS

Objects and landscapes that are further away are cooler and bluer in colour temperature than closer scenes because of the abundance of water in the atmosphere. Distant colours lose some of their vibrancy due to moisture in the air and other particles will blend in more with the surrounding environment. Early morning mists and fog will dramatically increase the effects of atmospheric perspective. Blues tend to be warmer in the foreground and cooler in the background.

Foreground

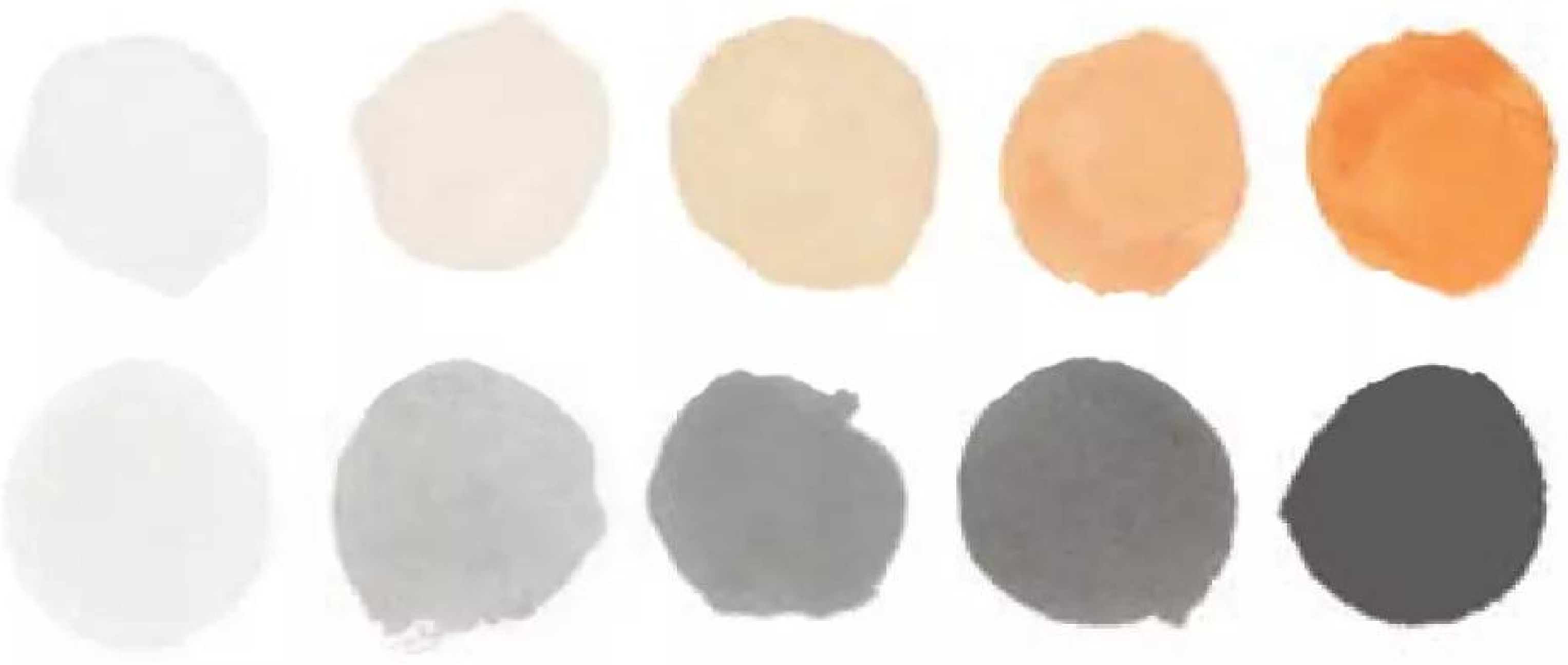
The shadow colours in the foreground are at their warmest and darkest with plenty of plush Ultramarine Blue.

Middle ground

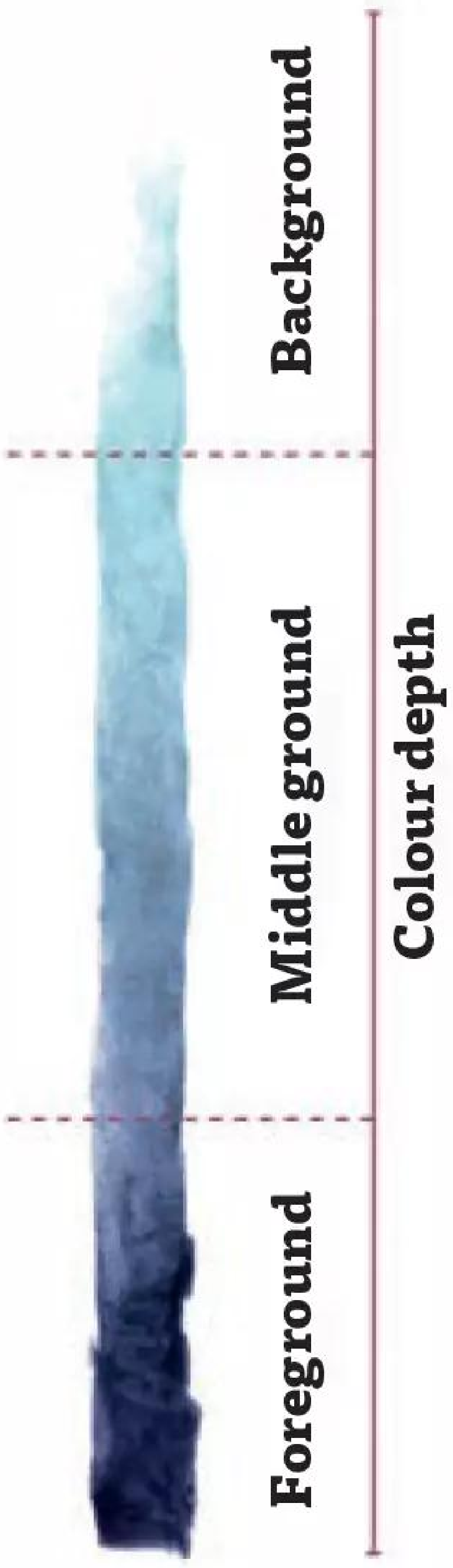
Mid-tones with cooler shadow notes distinguish the middle ground from the foreground.

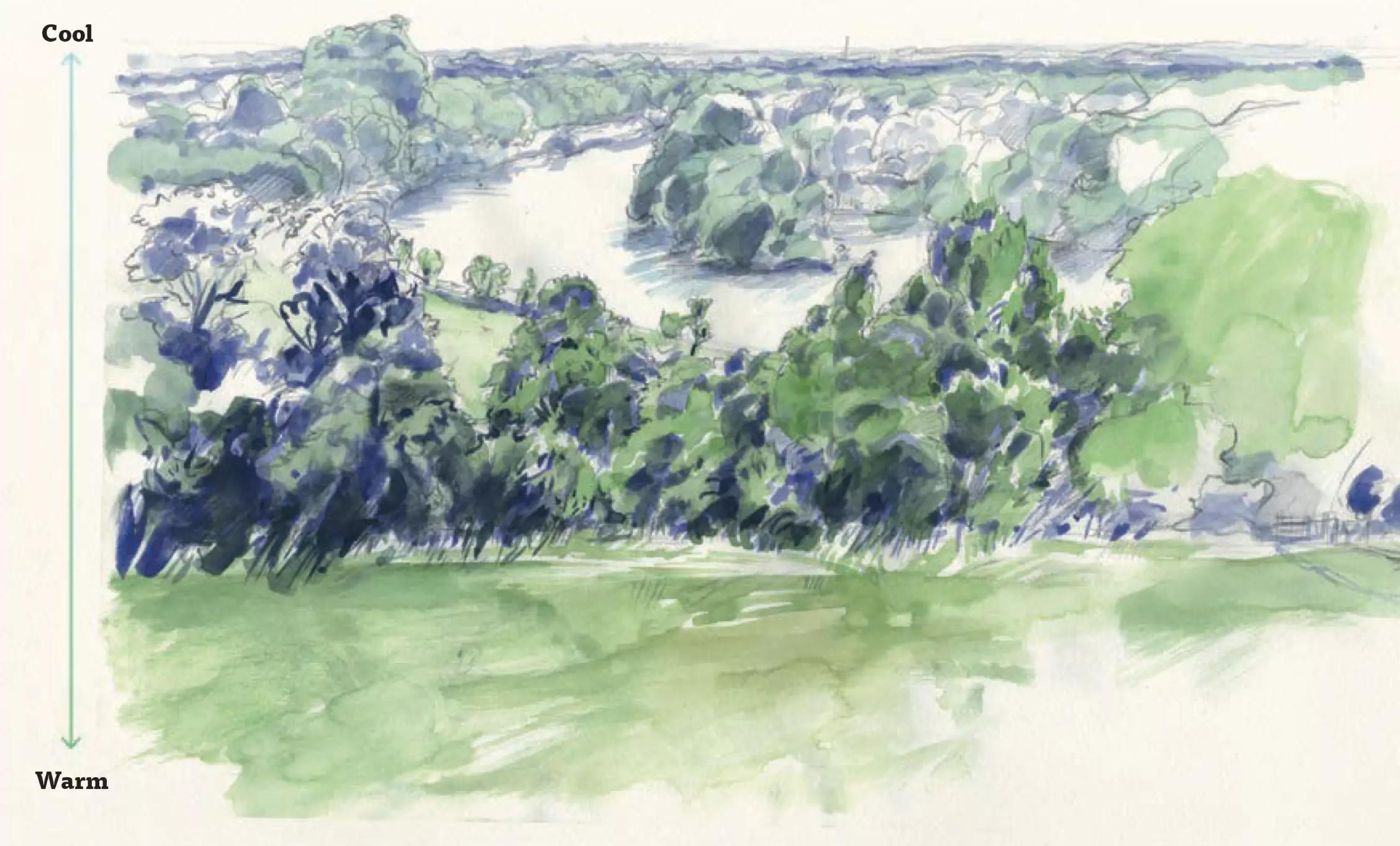
Background

For shadows in the background, add cooler greyer blues to the Ultramarine Blue mix and a touch of complementary orange to mute them.



▲ Saturation decreases with distance
The colours of distant objects merge in with and take on some of the blue hues of the atmosphere. As a result, they lose their colour saturation. Another effect of atmospheric interference is that tones become lighter. Colour is far less apparent in monochromatic night scenes.





▼ Turner's view
For generations, artists have been inspired by this view from Richmond Hill, Surrey. It is known as Turner's view, as he executed studies from here throughout his career. The illusion of distance is enhanced by cooling and desaturating colours as they recede to the horizon. □

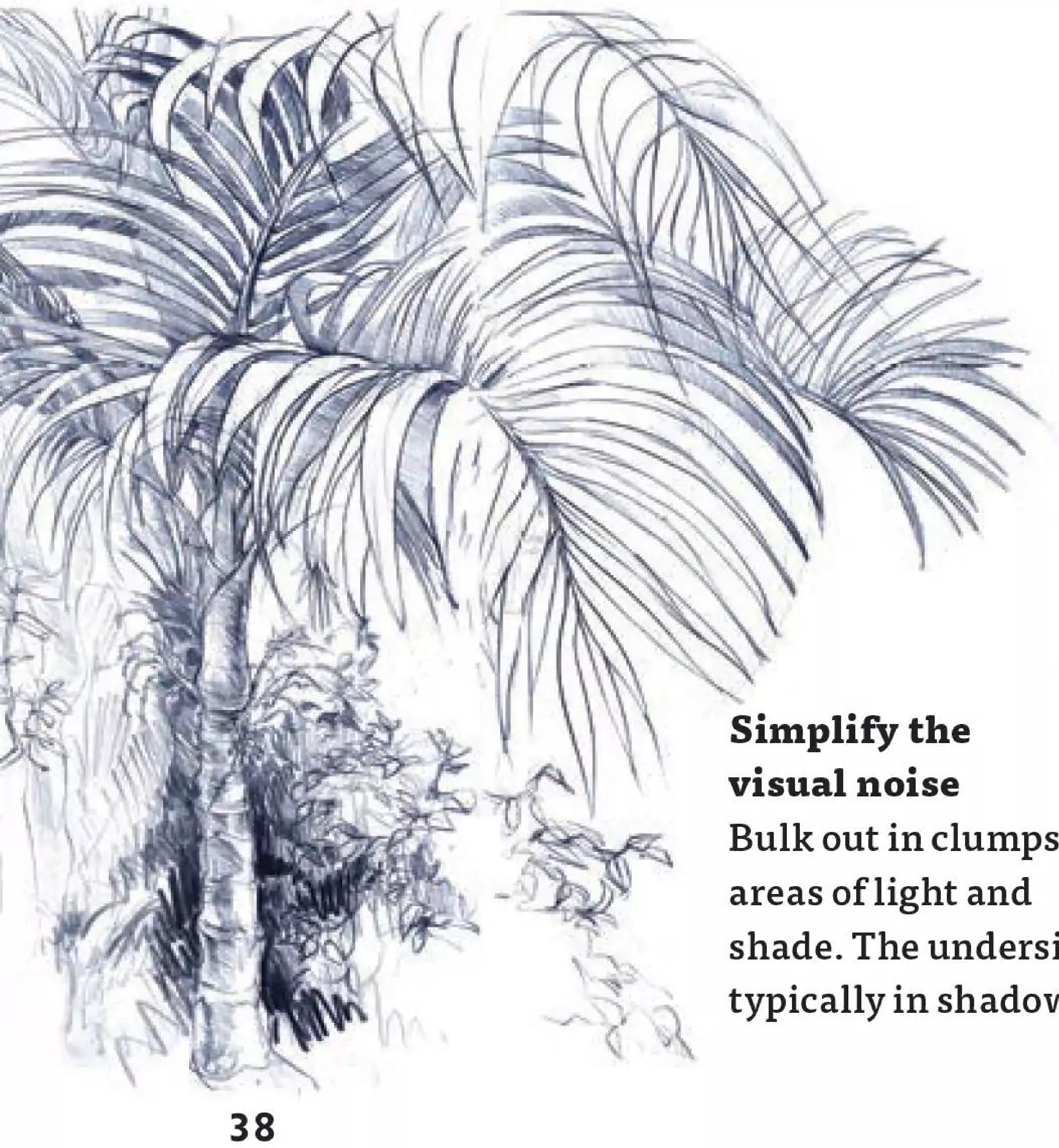
Looking through

The challenge of creating depth and space is not limited to the typical airy landscapes with a mosaic of scattered fields stretching to the horizon. In other locations, such as tropical rainforests, plants have taken over and evolved into spectacular lush vegetation with large leaves to harvest the sun's energy.

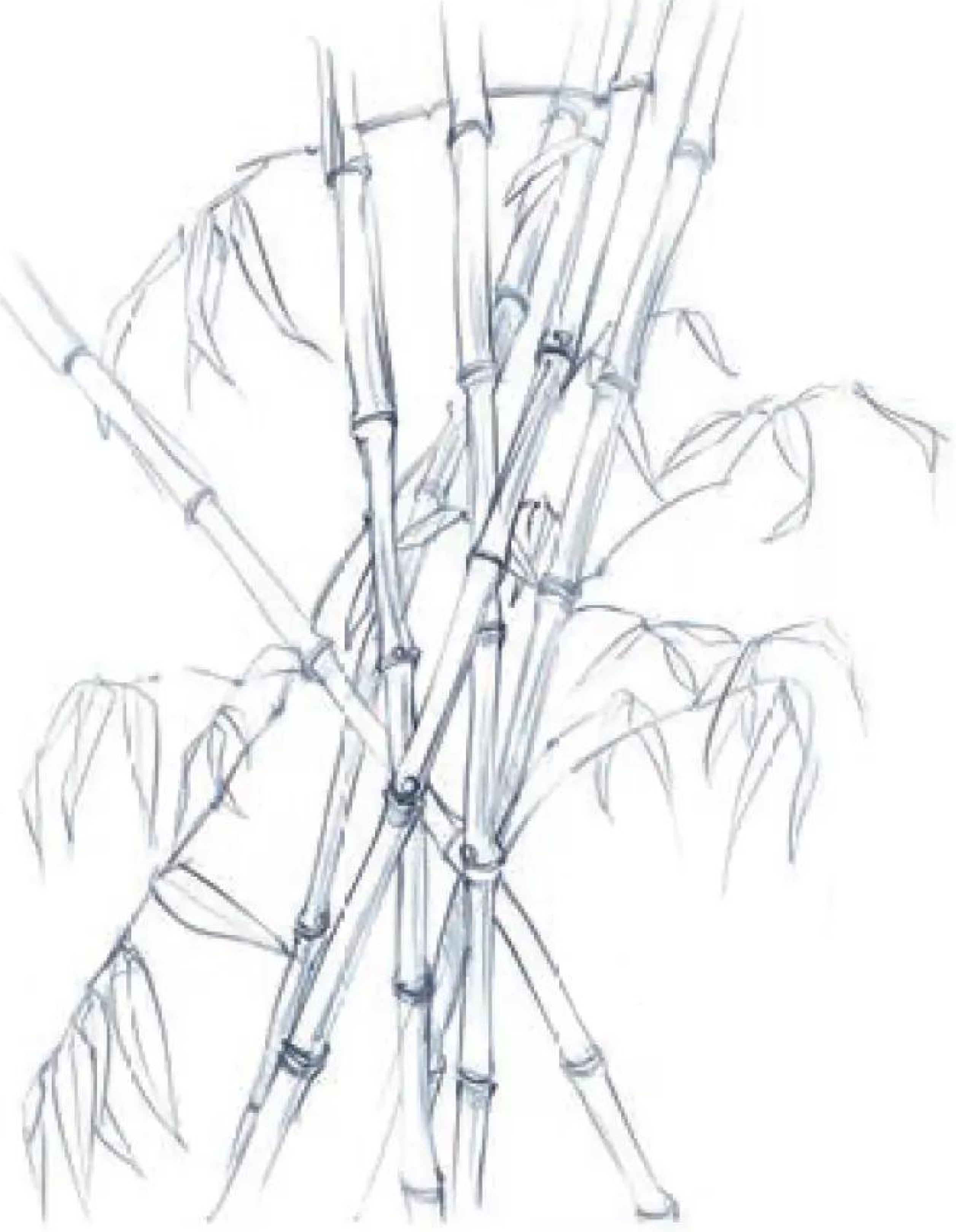
The vegetation in rainforests is so dense that only 2 per cent of the sun's rays can reach the ground. If you could visit one, your eyes would be met with a visual noise of diverse leaf shapes as you peer through larger foreground leaves to smaller distant ones. This scene can only be indicated with an impressionistic pattern (different leaves create different patterns) rather than botanical accuracy. It is not just in rainforests that this challenge of 'looking through' occurs: there are a myriad of other locations, from forest and woodlands to the subterranean habitats of caves.

YOU ARE NOT A CAMERA

The job for the artist is to see through all of the visual noise and give an impression of it. Fortunately, plant structures can be forgiving in that the viewer does not need to see exact proportions. You are constructing an interpretation of what you are seeing, and certain plants will need to be implied with an impression or a shadowy silhouette in the



Simplify the visual noise
Bulk out in clumps, as areas of light and shade. The underside is typically in shadow.



How to draw bamboo: seeing in segments

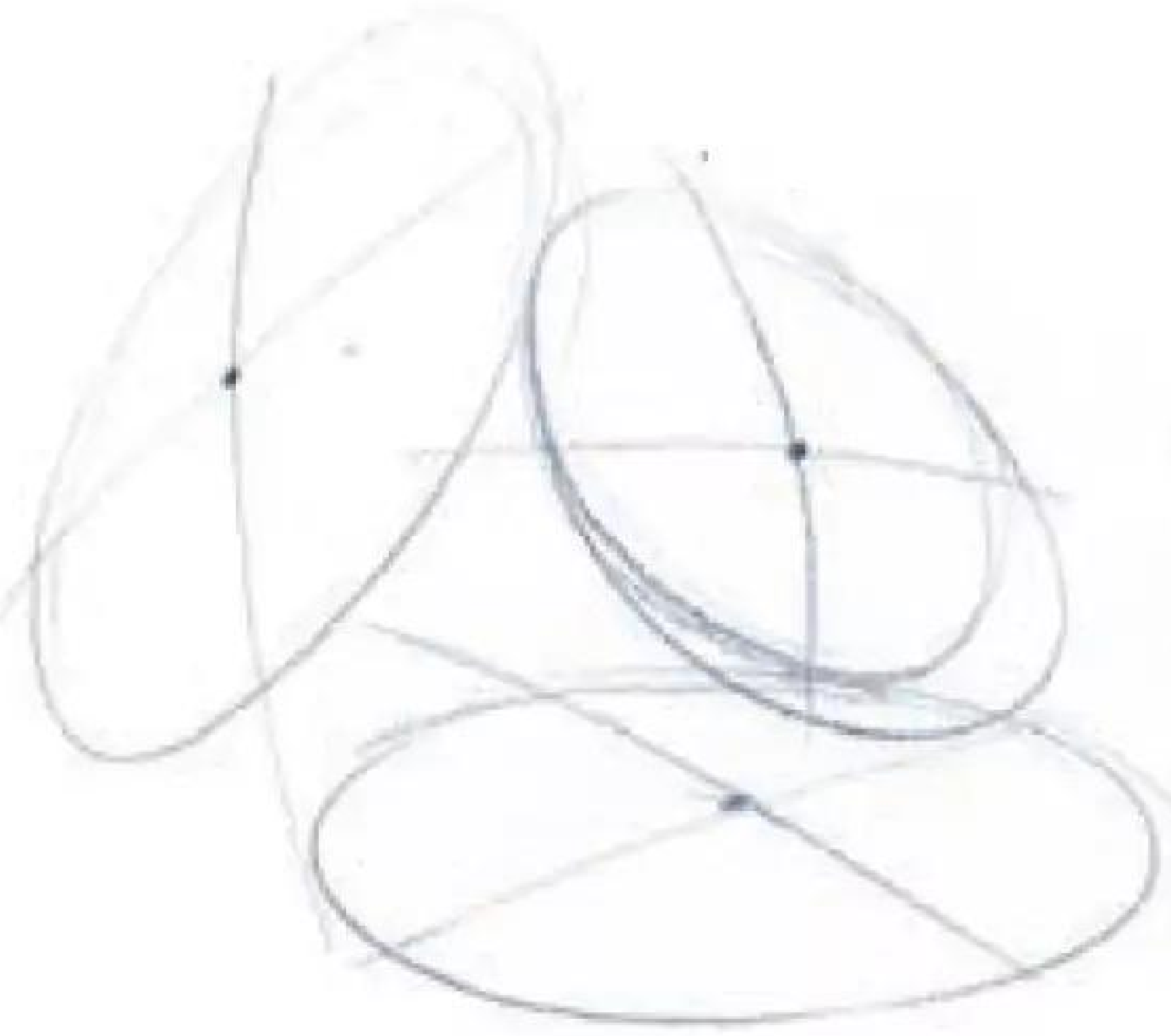
In a bamboo forest, the bamboo itself can be conceived as tube sections that join at slightly wider knuckles. Think of it as a playful game and create the impression that one stalk is in front of the other by overlapping lines.

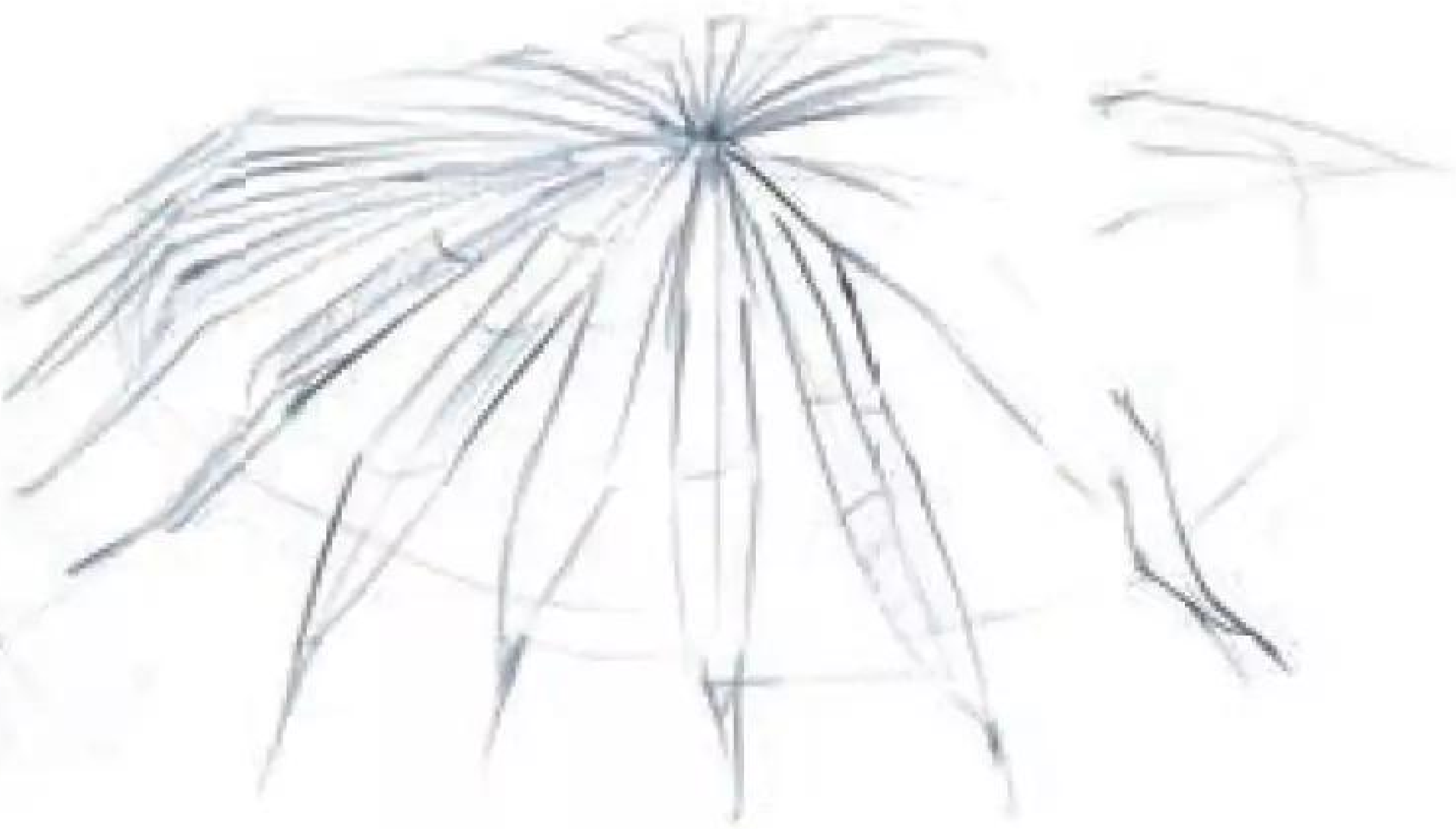
Draw each segment of a plant stalk with a pair of curved lines. Notice how these slightly converge towards the middle and splay out at the joints. Draw a series of short curved lines across each joint that are either concave or convex, depending on your viewpoint. Join short tubes together to allow the bamboo stalks to grow piece by piece.

Notice how one piece of bamboo will overlap the other, creating a sense of depth. I added the highly characteristic leaves at the end on thin spindly twigs, trying to make a smooth transition between the under and topside as they curled.

RAINFORESTS

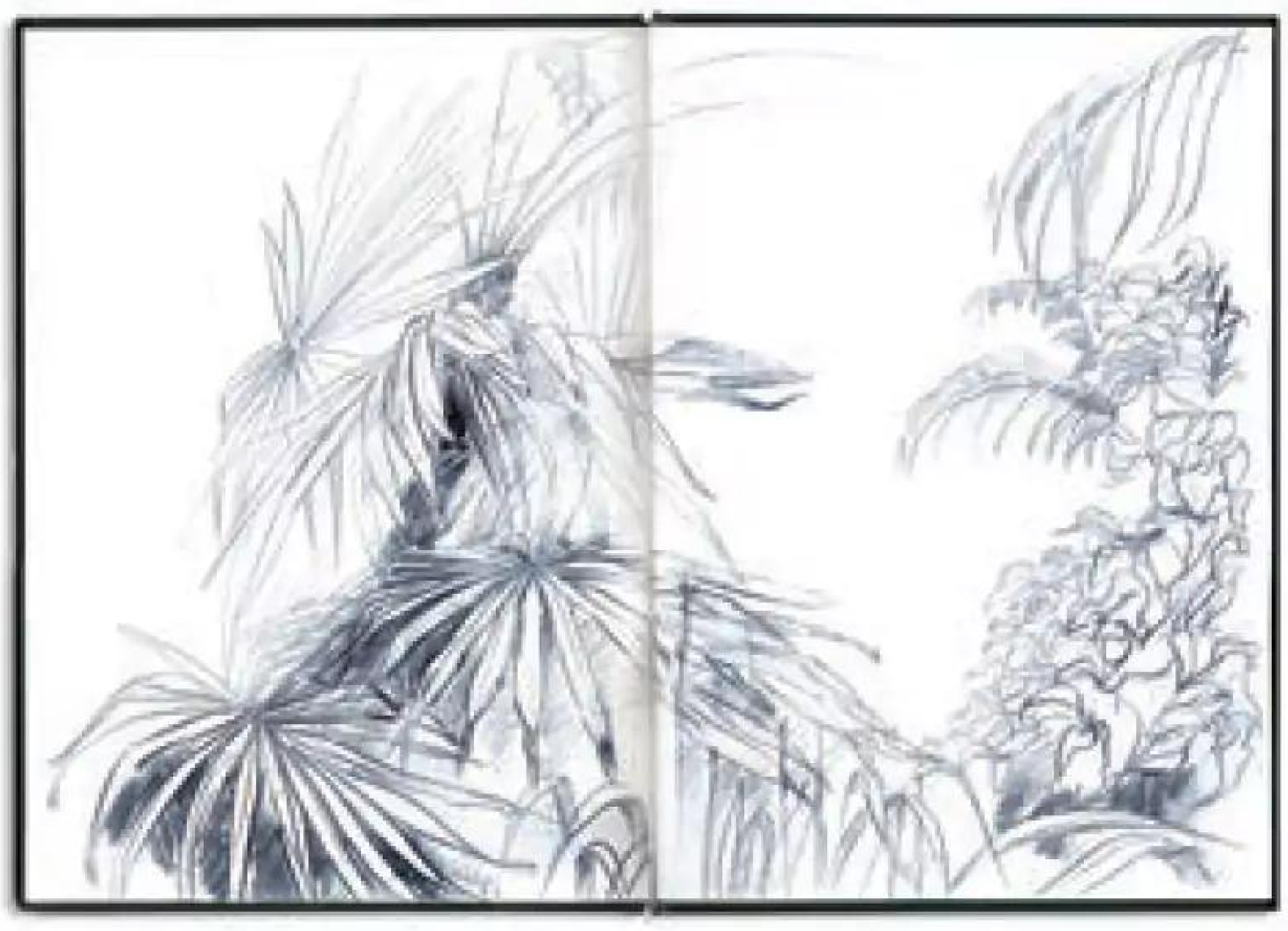
For inspiration, you can visit your local botanical garden and enter the palm house, where the air is heavy, hot and humid, and the lush vegetation has grown to gigantic proportions.





1 Begin your sketch by creating a light set of loops with cross lines to structure large jungle leaves.

2 Choose a focal point, such as the core of the plant's leaf as a starting point and let your drawing grow, working shape by shape and navigating your way to the neighbouring branches and leaves.

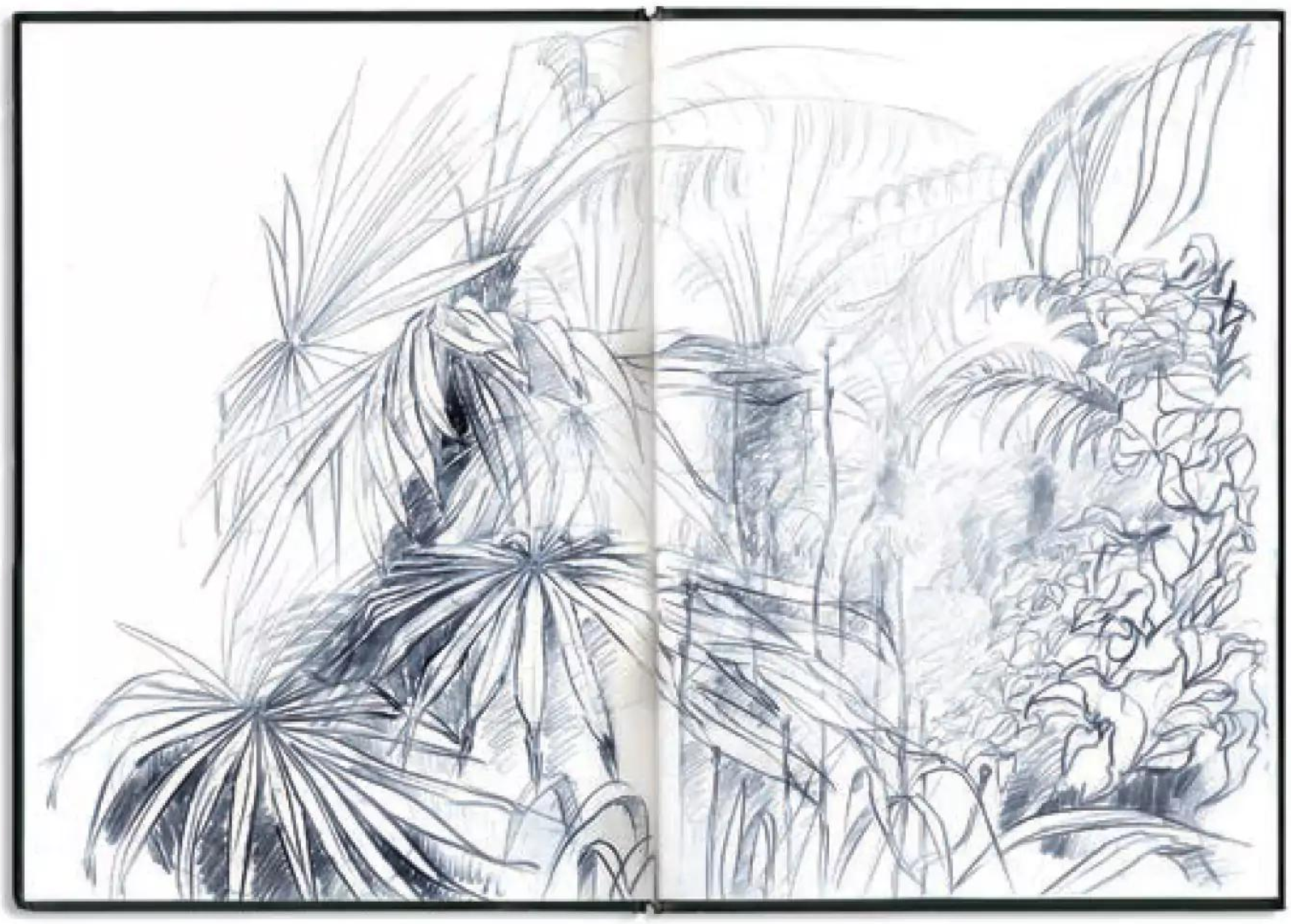


3 Draw forms closer to you with a darker, thicker line to create emphasis and pull them to the front. Use lines that overlap to inform the eye that one leaf is in front of the other. Sketch leaves in the distance more lightly and with less detail.

4 Create characteristic shapes that attempt to capture the myriad of different shapes and sizes of jungle leaves. Draw individual leaves in the foreground and suggest clumps in the distance where there is less detail and contrast.

Using contrast

Create high contrast in the foreground to project the leaf shapes forward to the viewer. I used a sharp pencil for the foreground and shaded the background when the pencil had become more blunt. □



Rainforests

Rainforest cover only around 6 per cent of the world's surface, but they account for 50 per cent of all species, and they play an essential role in the survival of life on earth. Large leaves allow tropical plants to capture more sunlight energy, and a plentiful supply of water is converted into food for growth In a rainforest, it is a race to the light for plants. Many plants have waxy leaves that help to repel the rain.

MATERIALS

- Indigo artist's quality colouring pencil
- Large cartridge (drawing) paper or sketchbook
- Sharpener
- Putty eraser

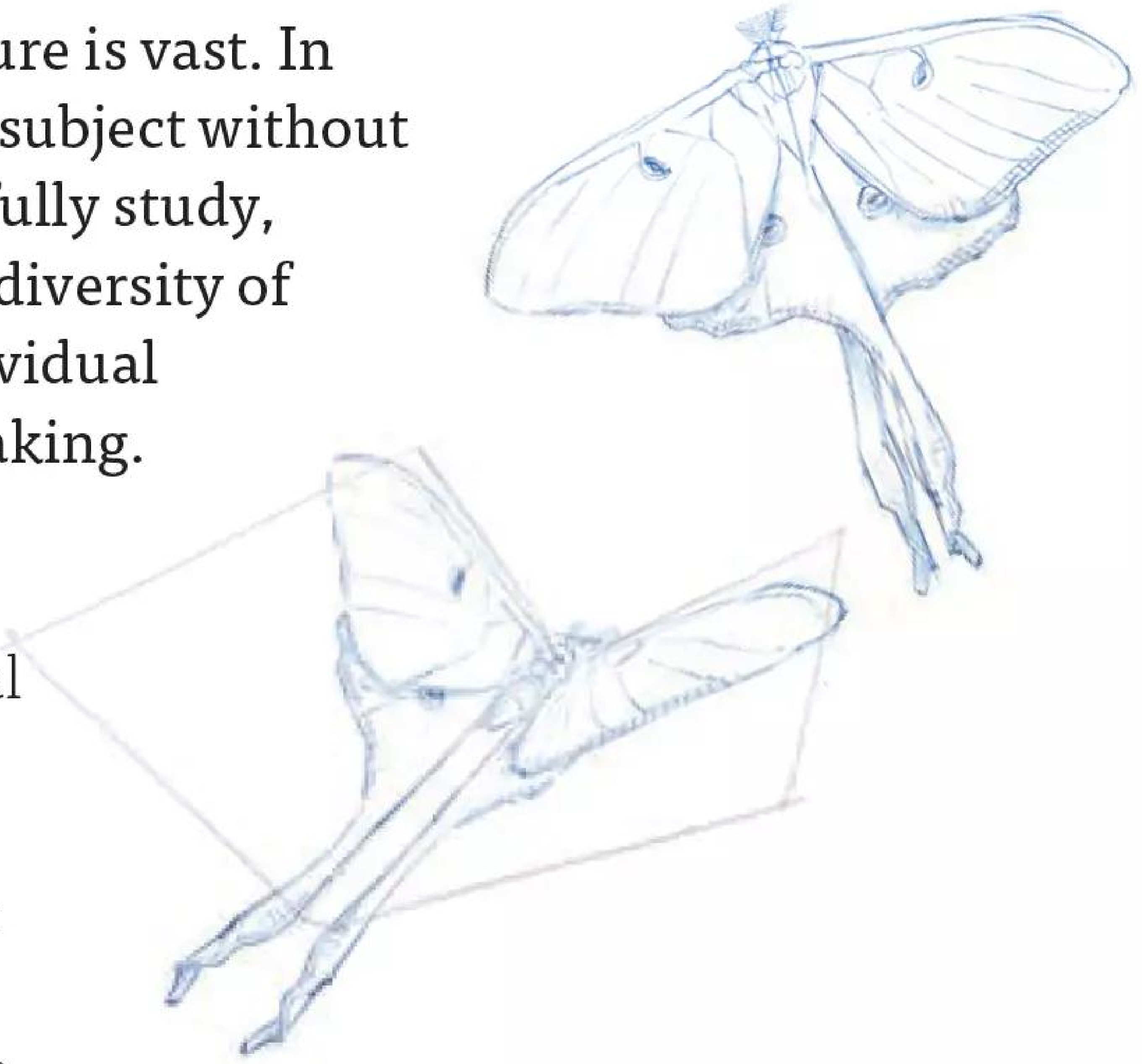
Pattern & texture essentials

The wealth of different patterns and textures found in nature is vast. In trying to draw one, it is easy to make assumptions about a subject without fully appreciating its changing pattern. I suggest you carefully study, for example, the variety of spots on a leopard's coat or the diversity of cracks in an old oak's bark. Explore experimental and individual ways to imply both pattern and texture with your mark making.

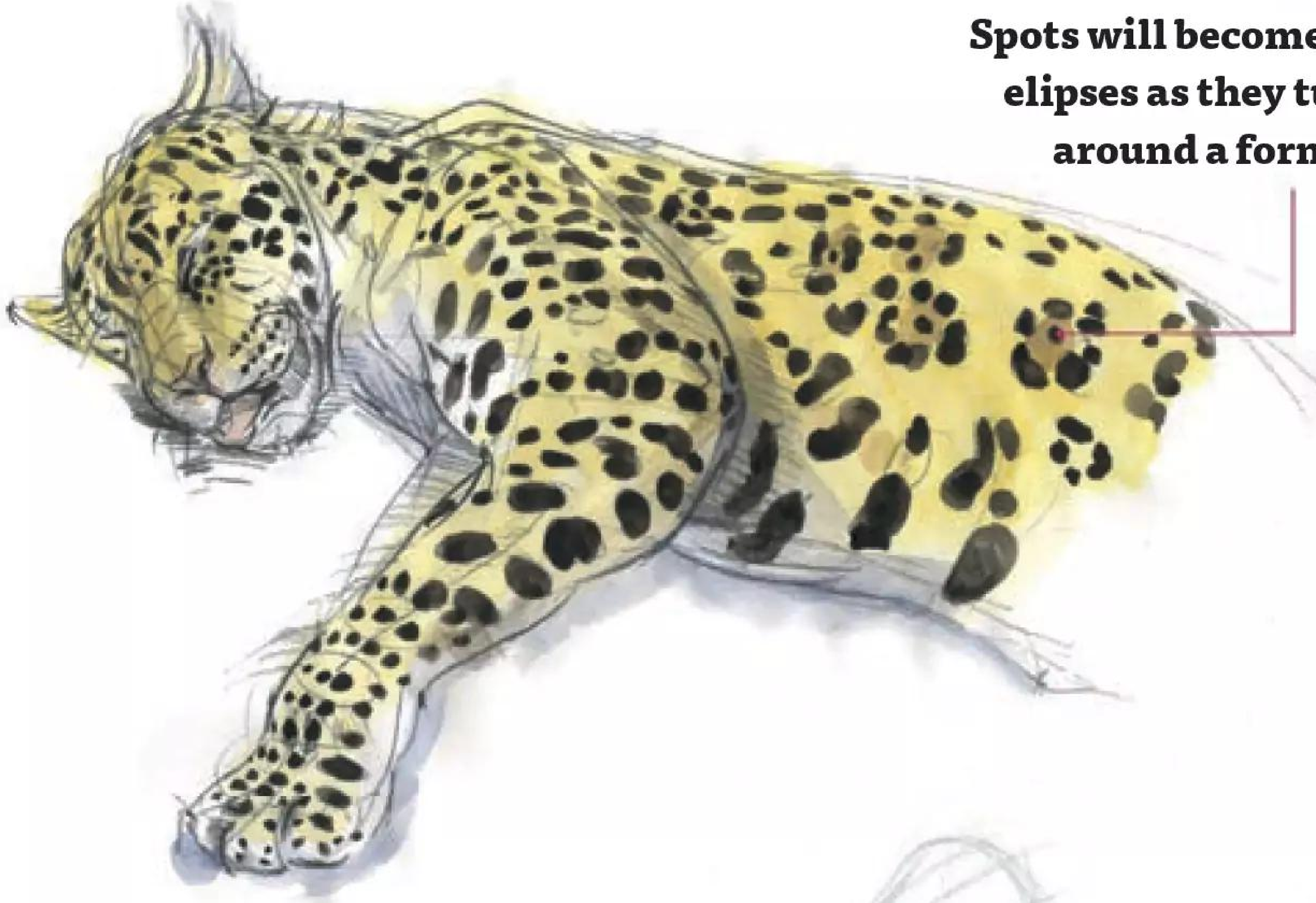
PATTERN

In nature, patterns typically seem to follow some geometrical order that are broken down or modified by organic interruptions or imperfections. For example, zebra stripes (which are as individual as a fingerprint) are not just straight vertical lines, they change angle at the shoulder.

I look for order in pattern using light tracing marks to create the geometrical frame for the placement of the pattern. These can interlock into a grid referred to as an X-wrap as a way to make sense of what can otherwise be chaos.



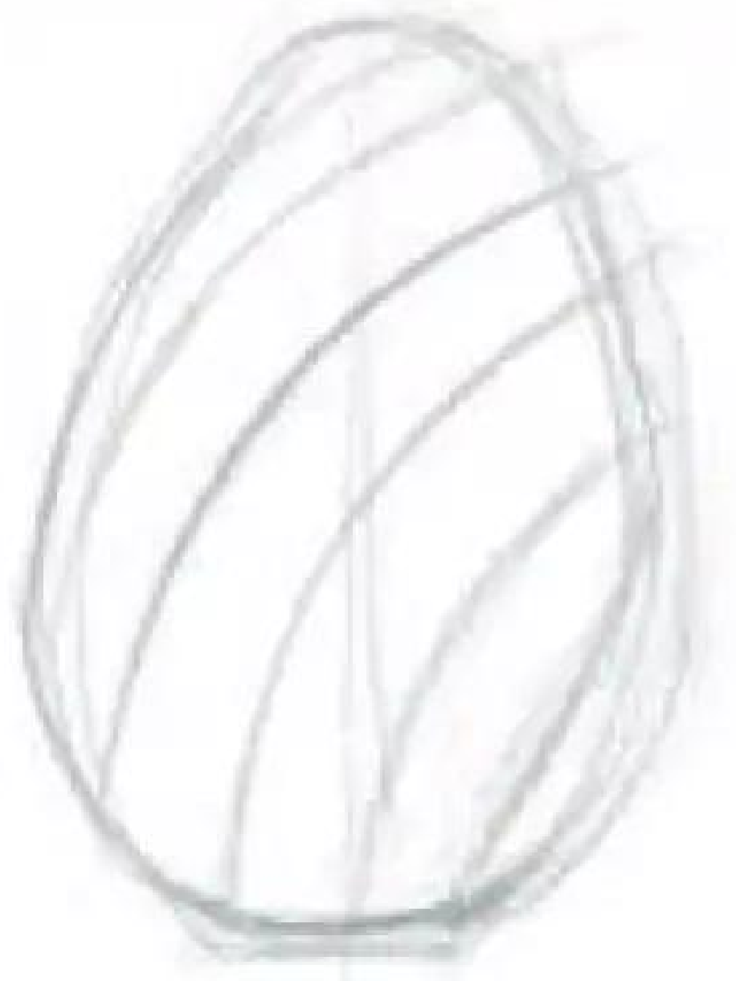
Mirrored symmetry in patterns Butterfly and moth wings represent perfect symmetry. An excellent way to visualize this pattern is to imagine the insect painted on a folded piece of paper.



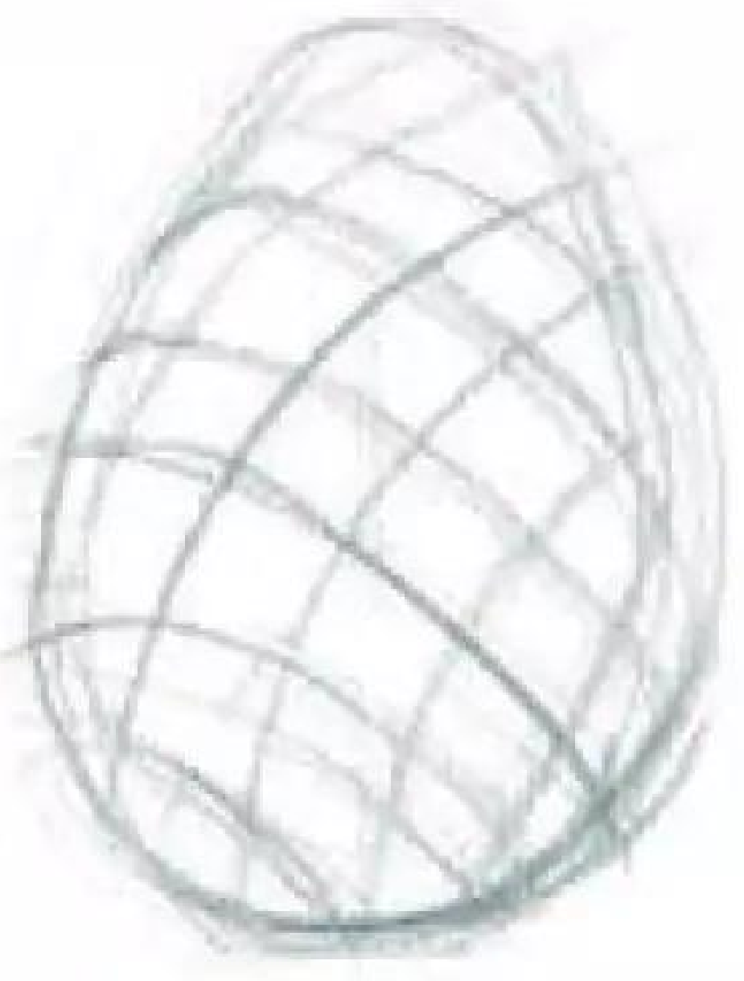
Spots will become thin elipses as they turn around a form

Variations on a theme Rosettes are jagged black circles with tawny centres that appear on a jaguar's or leopard's coat. They vary significantly in appearance and shape, changing to small disc shapes on the head, resembling bean shapes, paw prints or ellipses. This sketch was created from life and watercolour was added from observing a photograph in the studio.

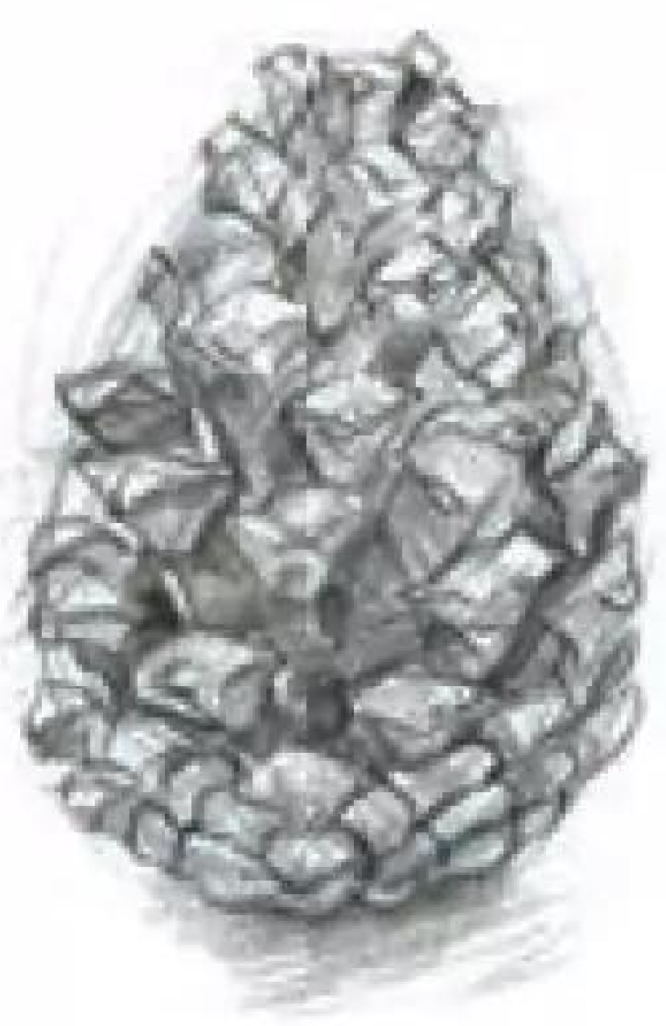
X-wrap The interlocking spiralling shapes of scales on a pine cone can be plotted with an initial X-wrap. This is a criss-cross scaffold of opposing diagonal lines that acts as a framework for repeating geometric forms.



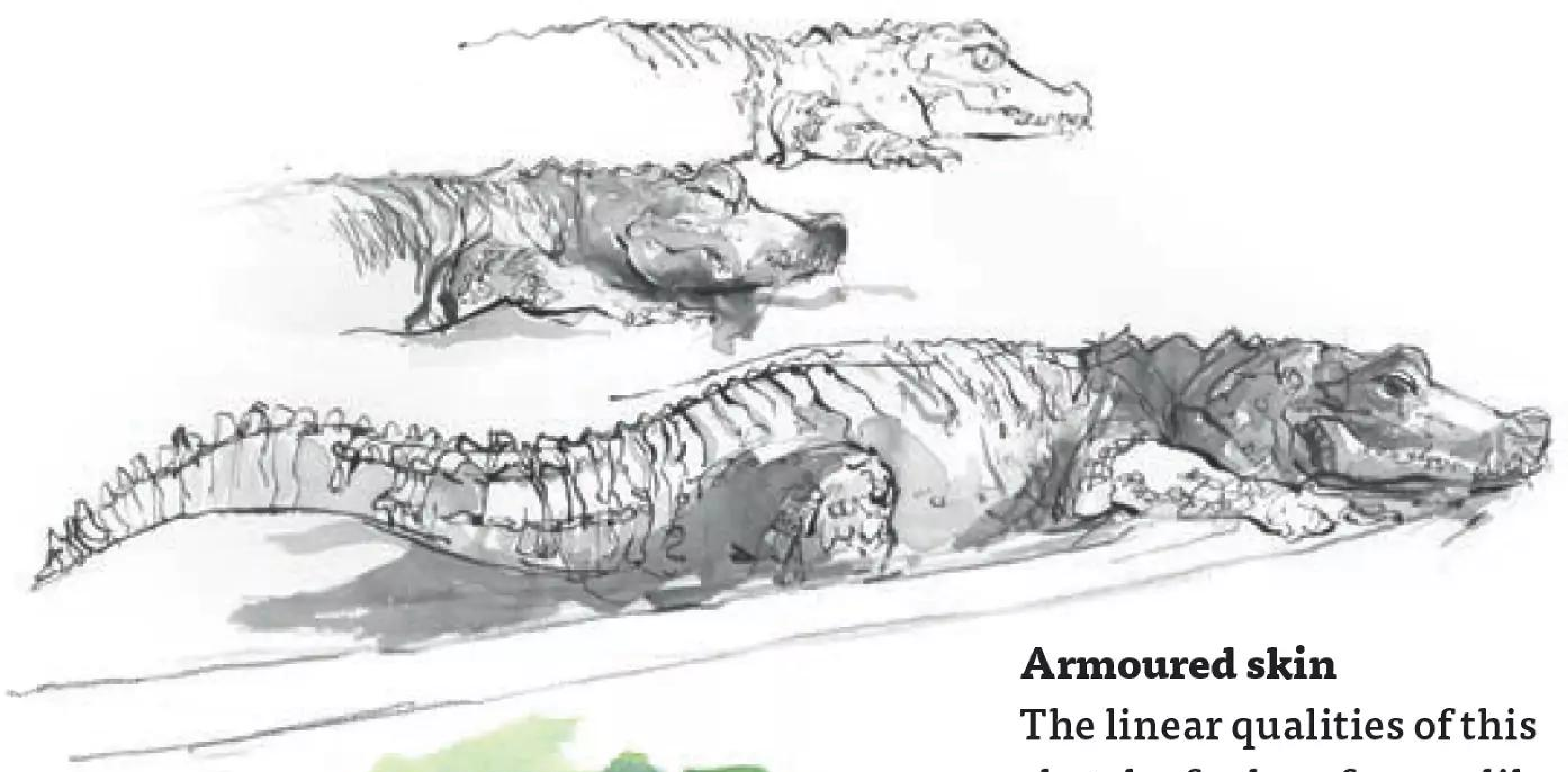
1 Sketch out the main shape and central axis, in this case an egg shape, and create arcs that wrap around in the clockwise direction of the rows of scales.



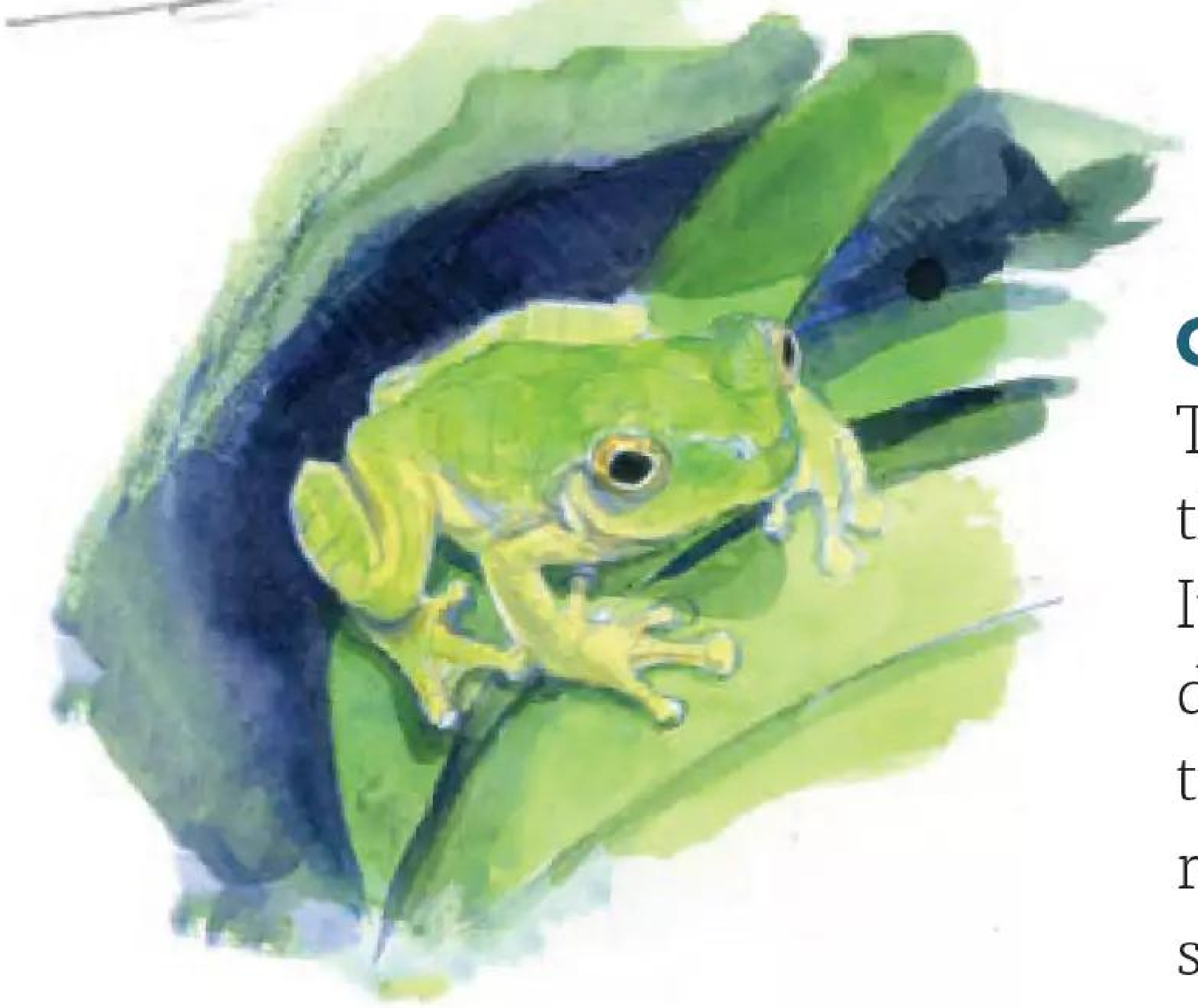
2 Add a second series of arcs that run in the opposite direction.



3 Choose a scale and draw it in the corresponding position in the X-wrap, and let the drawing grow from there, shape to shape.



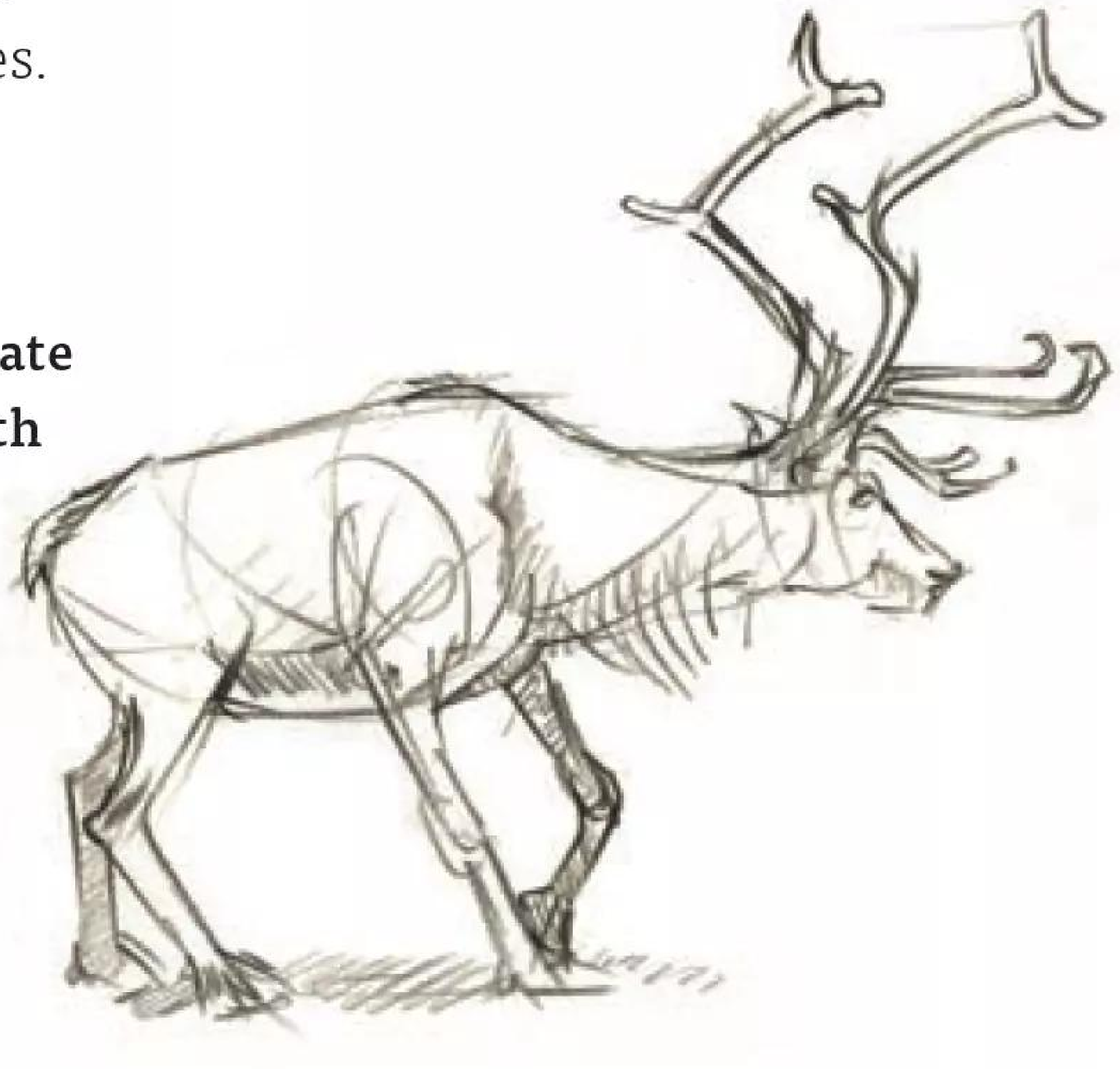
Armoured skin
The linear qualities of this sketch of a dwarf crocodile suggests their scaly skin.



TEXTURE

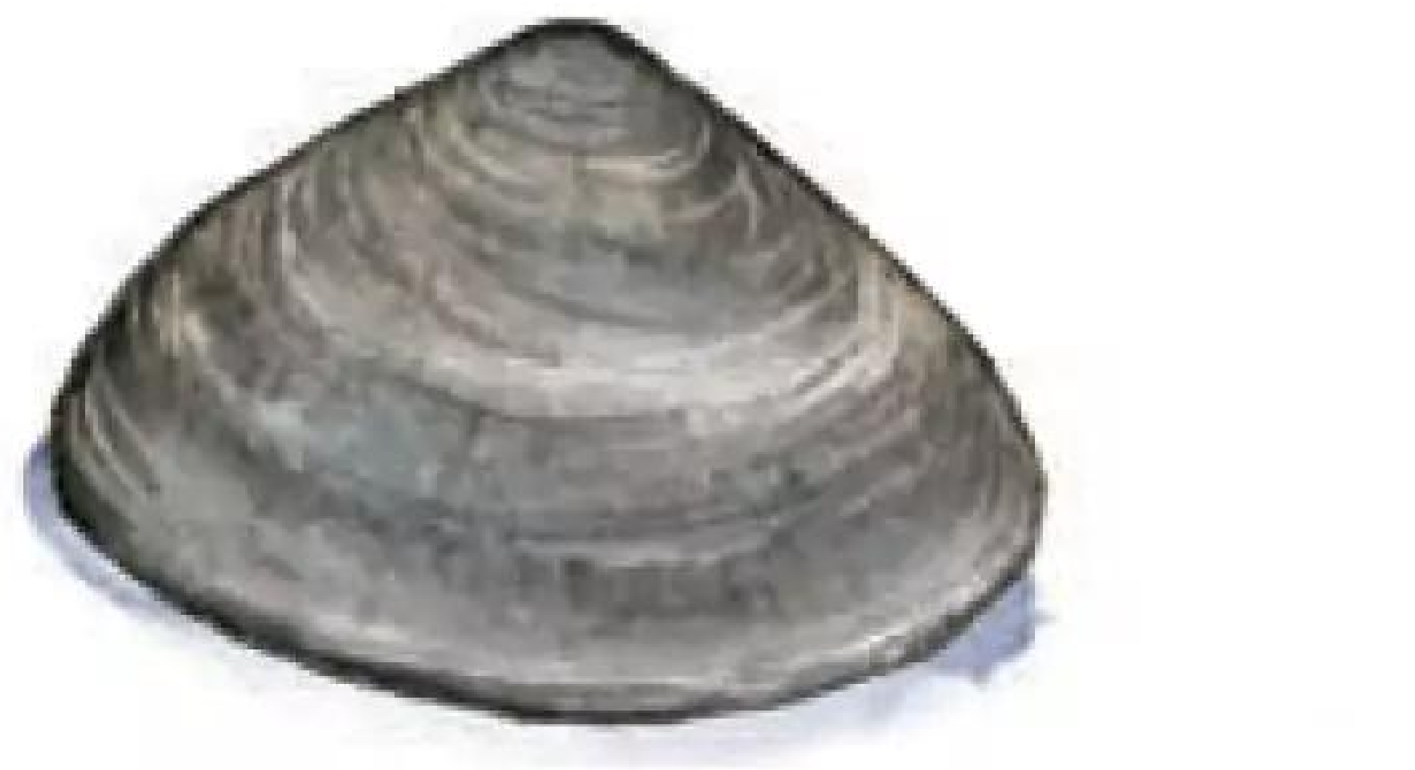
Animals and plants have a host of different textures that will challenge your drawing ability. Imagine the difference between stroking a cat and a crocodile, or the sharp prick of a cactus to brushing your hand through wavering seagrass. Every subject you draw will have a texture, even the smoothness of glass-like ice. Be prepared to be creative and change your drawing media to meet the challenge ahead. The way you create shading is particularly important to suggest different textures.

Hair marks
Look for divisions in the clumps of the pelt and create suggestive hair marks with flicks of your wrist. The hair tends to be longer and thicker in certain areas, such as beneath the necknon ungulates.



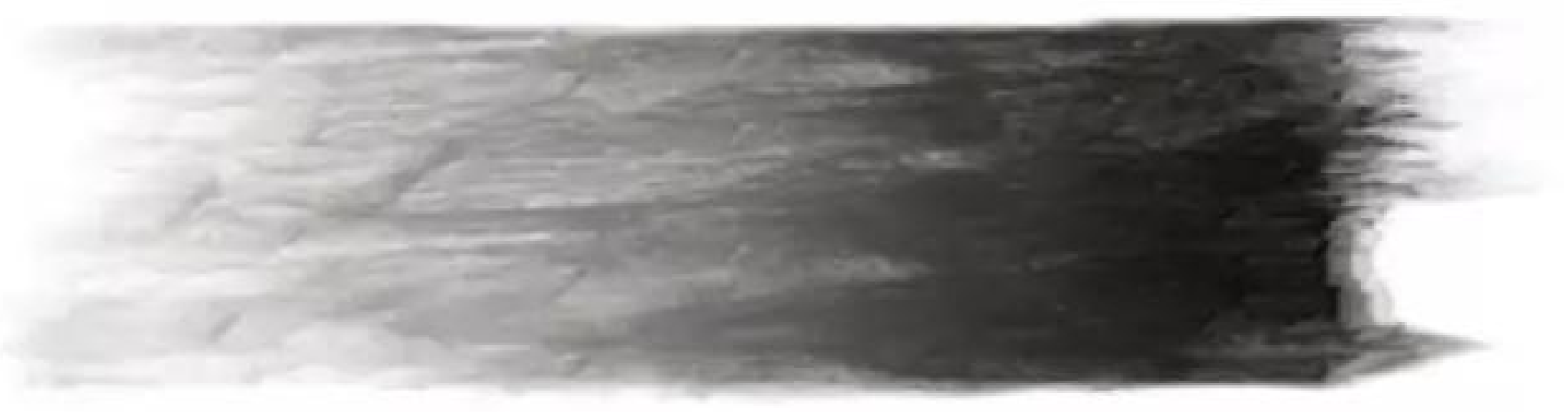
OPTICAL TEXTURE

Trompe l'oeil is a French term that means 'to deceive the eye.' It refers to a painting style that depicts an object or scene so true to life that it seems to be real, not just a painting on a flat surface. (This is also referred to as verisimilitude.) Well-known examples include a fly crawling on the surface of a painting and faux textures of marble painted on walls. Here's an exercise to try yourself: experiment with watercolour and ink to try to capture the impression of wet glistening skin. You can also experiment by using unusual painting tools and different techniques, such as rolling rags to create a crumbling effect or dry brushing (using a pigment without water) with turkey feathers to try to imitate marble.



SGRAFFITO

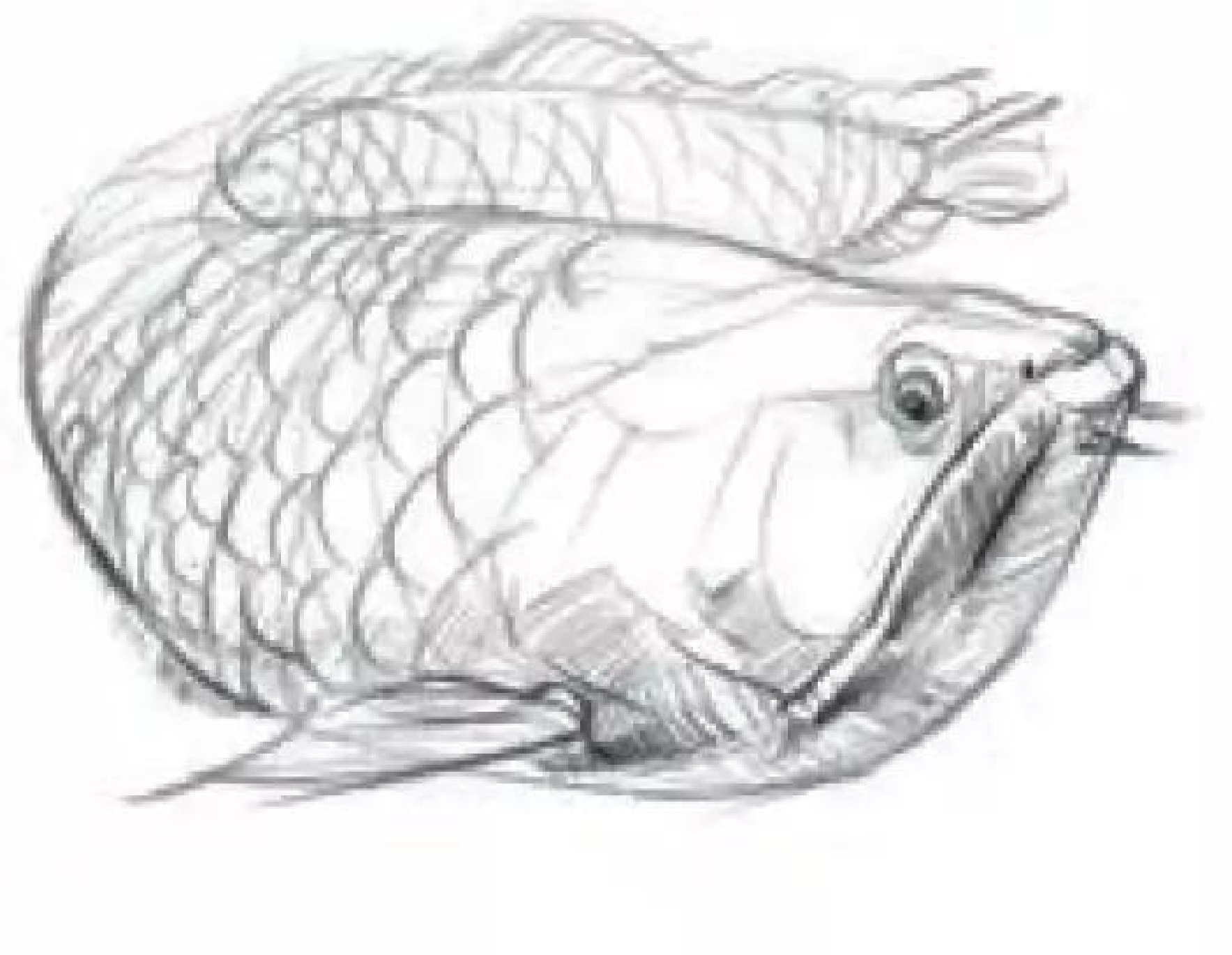
Artists working on a two-dimensional surface use a technique known as sgraffito to produce texture. Sgraffito, which means 'scratched' in Italian, involves laying down a preliminary surface, covering it with another one and then scratching the top layer to reveal the underlying colour beneath. Scratching through layers of oil pastel with a compass point can capture the texture of the growth rings of a mussel.



SFUMATO

A technique that merges the edges of colours to create a gentle transition between colours or tones is known as sfumato, which is from the Italian meaning 'soft', 'vague' or 'indistinct.' It can be thought of as blurring. Charcoal and watercolour are excellent media for creating these soft transitions where you want a smooth texture, for example, between the light and shade on a cheek, or a misty landscape.

Combine both pattern and texture together
Try to make capturing both pattern and texture in your field study sheets. Both can be used to create highly decorative drawings that dazzle the senses. □



Composition essentials

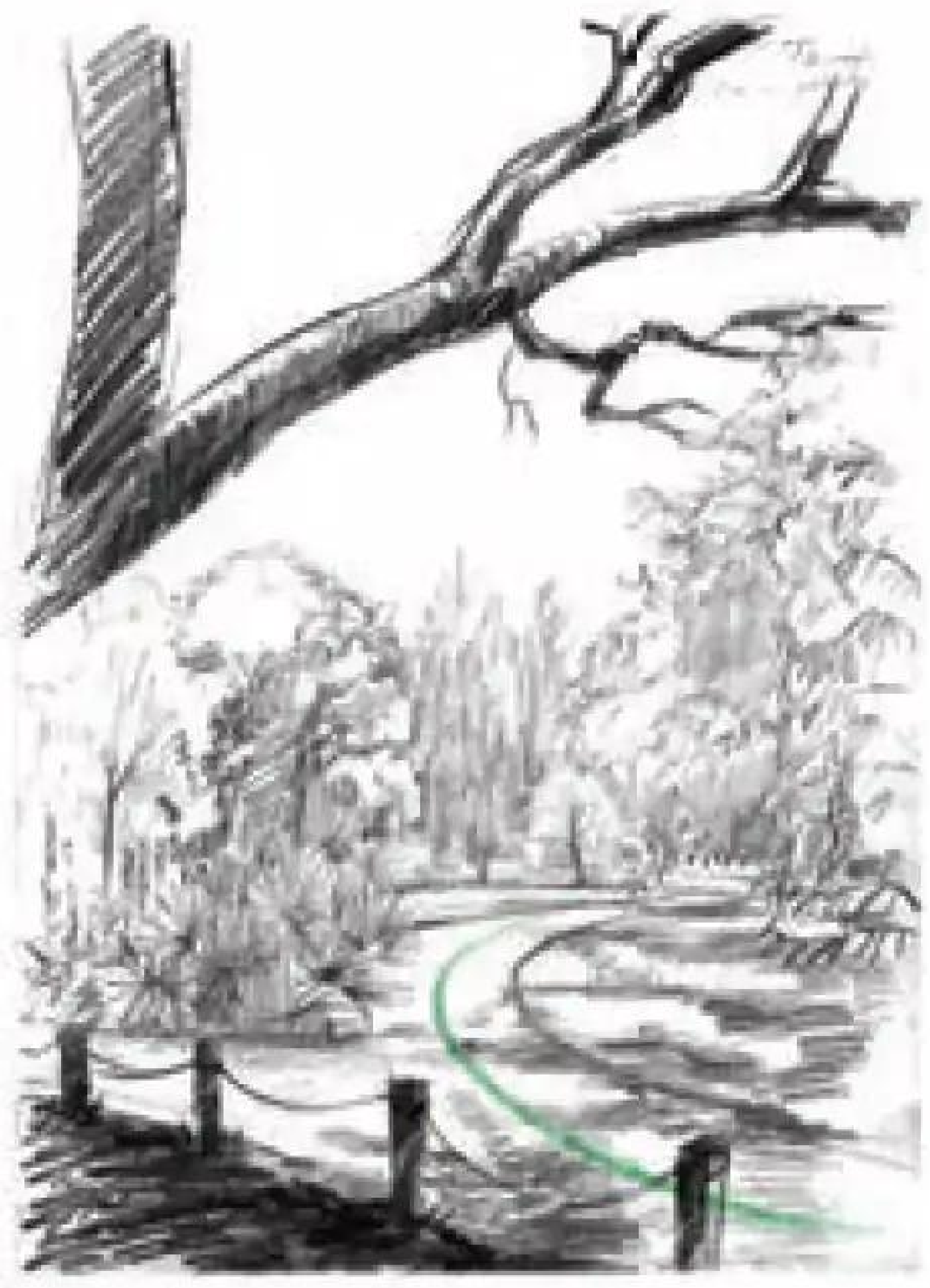
Many artists have worked intuitively rather than carefully structuring their compositions and have produced beautiful drawings. However, it is essential to equally consider the planned and structured method. Here are some of the compositional ideas I have found to be the most helpful. These guidelines don't need to be followed mathematically and can be mixed and matched together.

PORTRAIT, LANDSCAPE OR SQUARE?

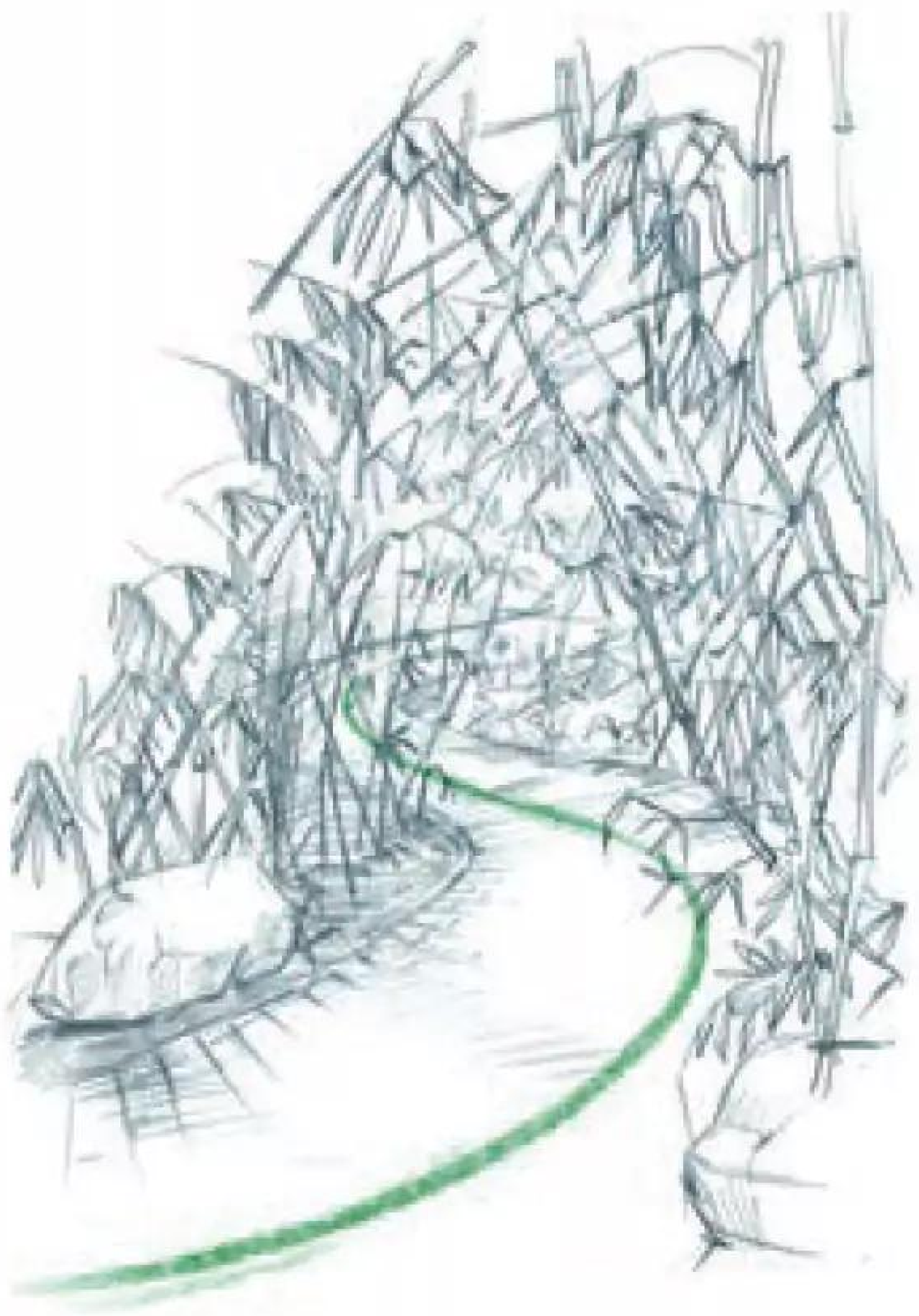
Composition can inspire awe, drama, tension and dynamic action. A long or wide panoramic shot can tell us about the setting and give a sense of place, such as an expansive seascape. A close-up can reveal the character of a shell you might have found there or the emotion of a family playing with a dog on the sand. There are endless possibilities of focus in any location, so I suggest following your intuition while remaining open to new compositions and areas of focus. A sketchbook can be turned to accommodate either landscape or portrait, and three-quarters of the page can be used for square compositions.

VISUAL HIERARCHY

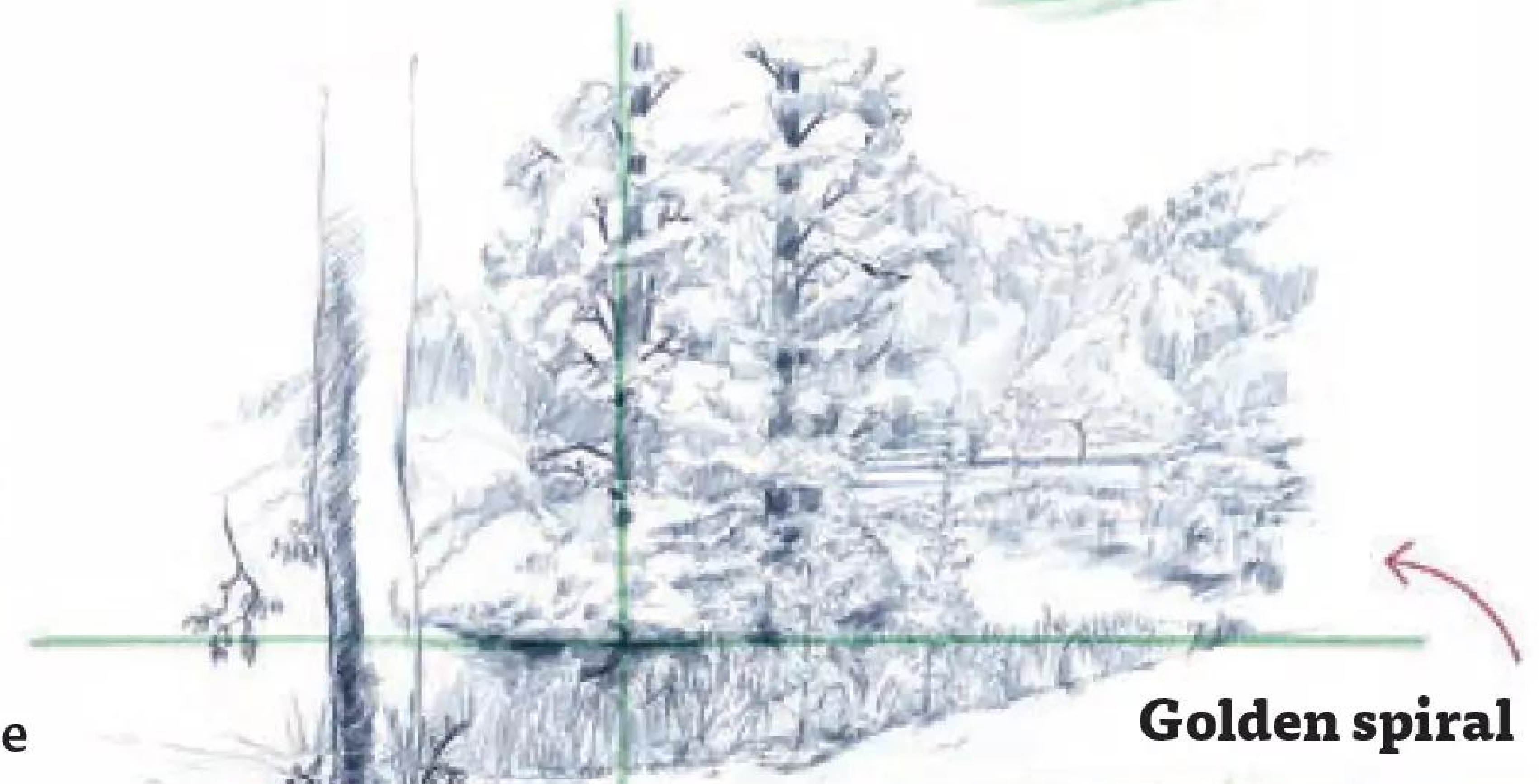
In a good composition, a viewer's eyes will be directed where to focus on the drawing, and in what sequence, by certain prominent elements that draw attention more forcefully than other ones, while other elements play supporting roles. If everything was the same size, the eye would have to compete for attention with each component. Including smaller items also aids in determining the size of larger ones.



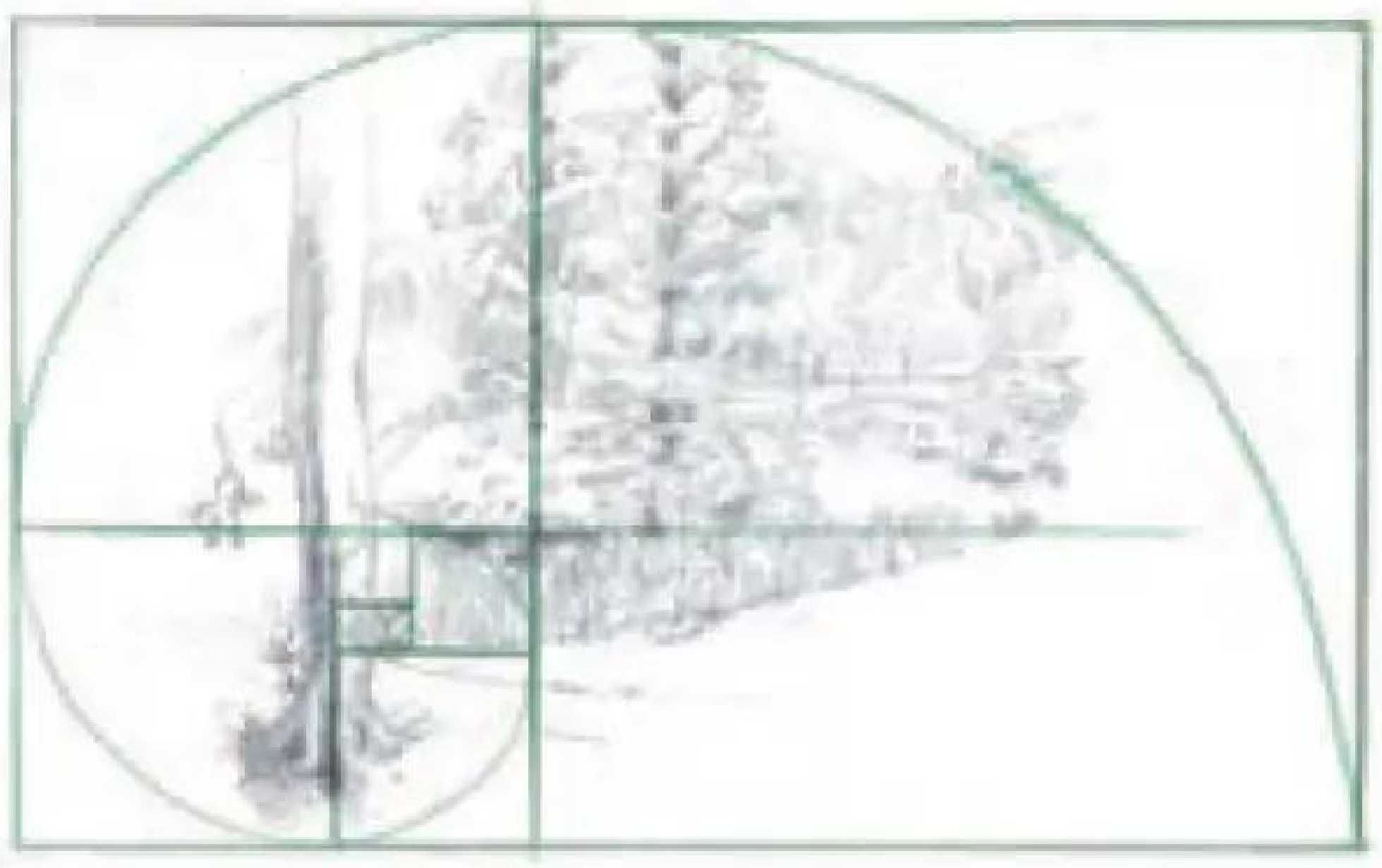
C-shaped rhythm
This drawing's intended focal point, the distant tree, can be reached by following a C-shaped trail that carries the eye through the composition. Note that the silhouetted fence posts and tree bough in the foreground frame.



S-shaped rhythm
Using an S-shaped rhythm will lead the eye gently through the landscape. It is a very effective technique with the artist leading the viewer on a gentle meandering journey through their drawing.

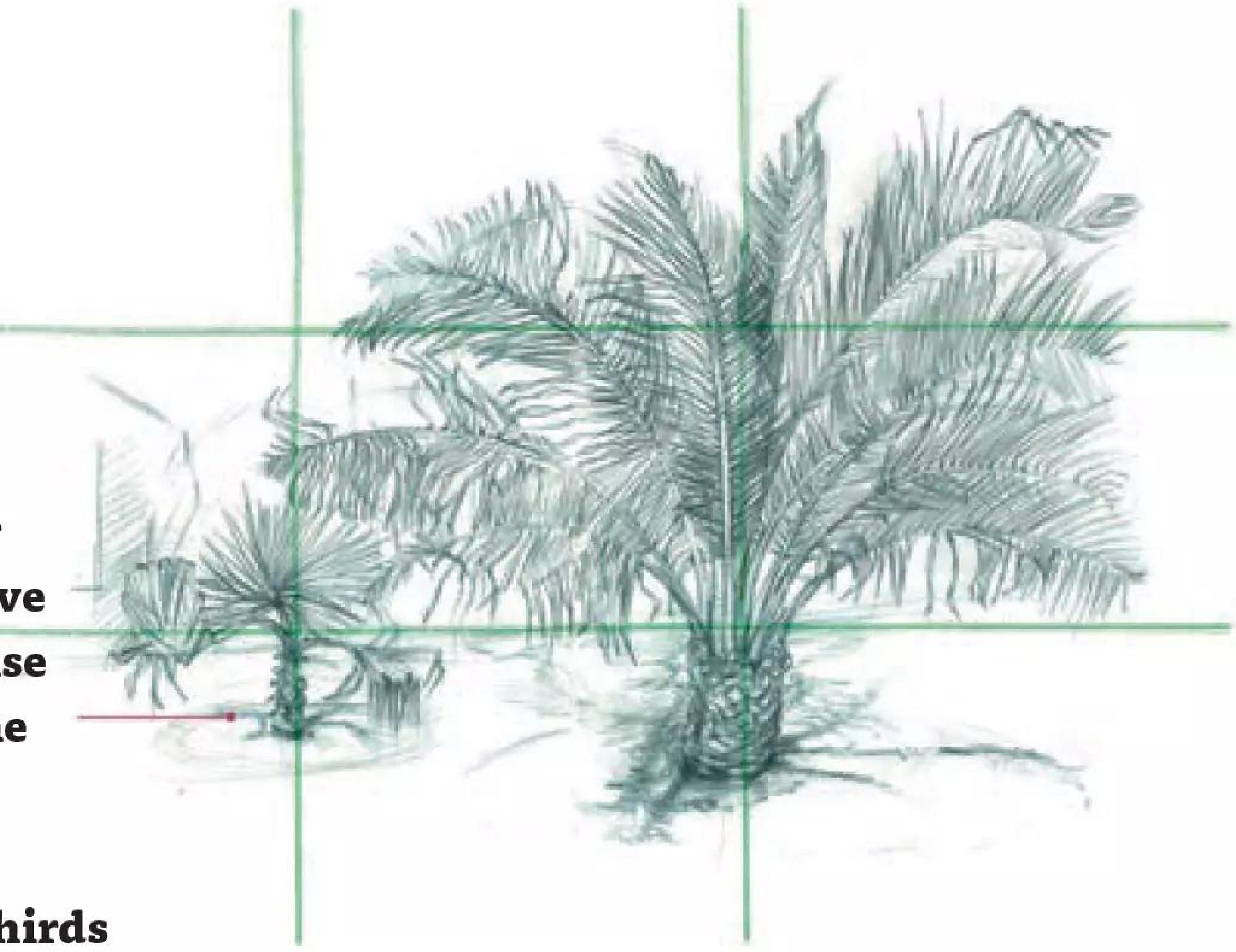


The golden ratio
Artists have used the golden ratio to organize elements and divisions and to harmoniously distribute weight. Using these proportions can bring a sense of peace and tranquillity to a drawing, even if they are only loosely applied. The smallest portion – which is also where the viewer's attention will be focused – has a ratio of roughly 1:1.618 to the next larger portion, just as that portion does to the following portion and so forth.



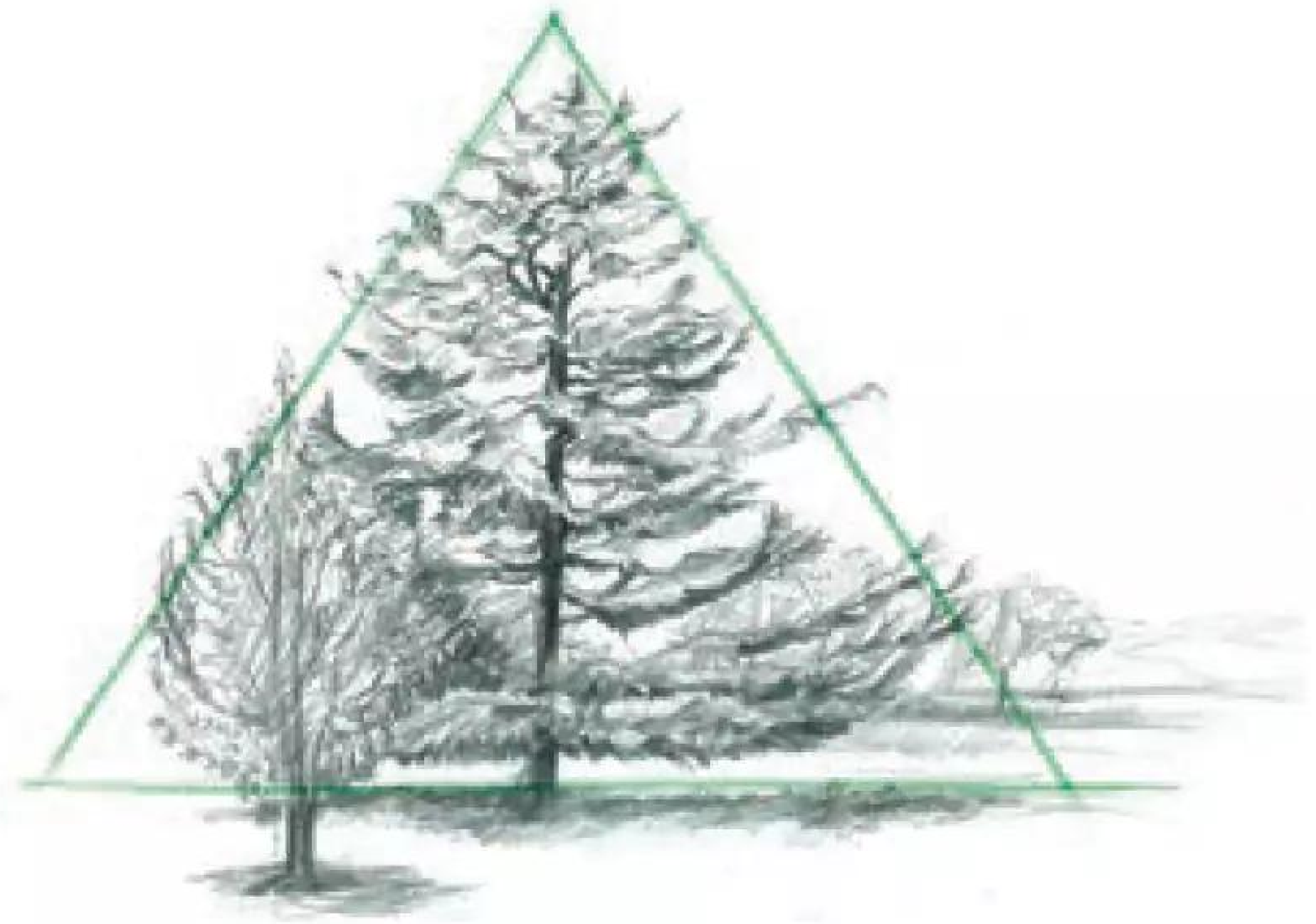
Golden spiral

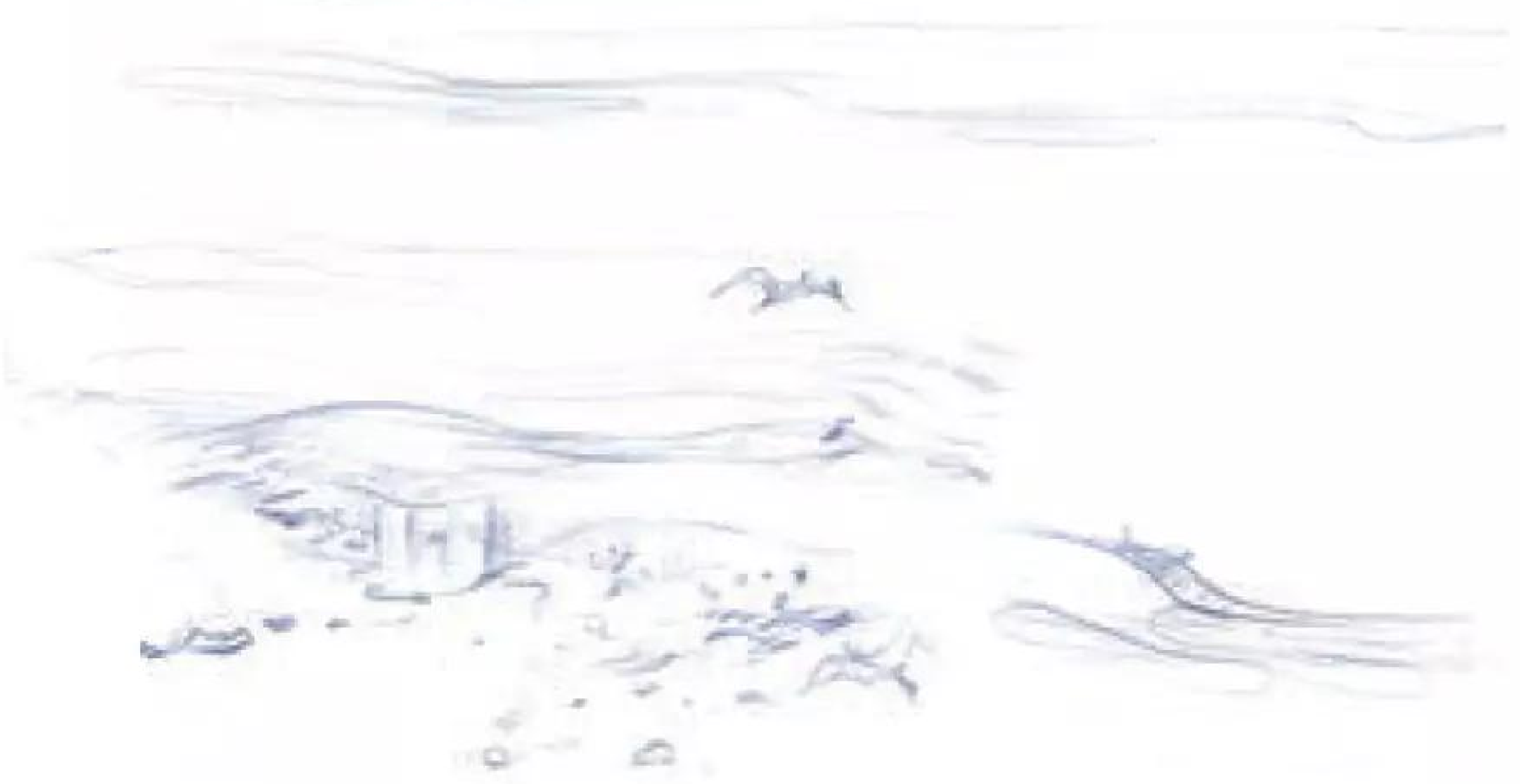
▼ Triangular
Renaissance artists used triangular or pyramidal compositions. They achieved harmony and balance by arranging the subjects into a solid overall geometric structure. To create a sense of informality, I positioned the focal point of the conifer off-centre and emphasized the contrast with dark shading.

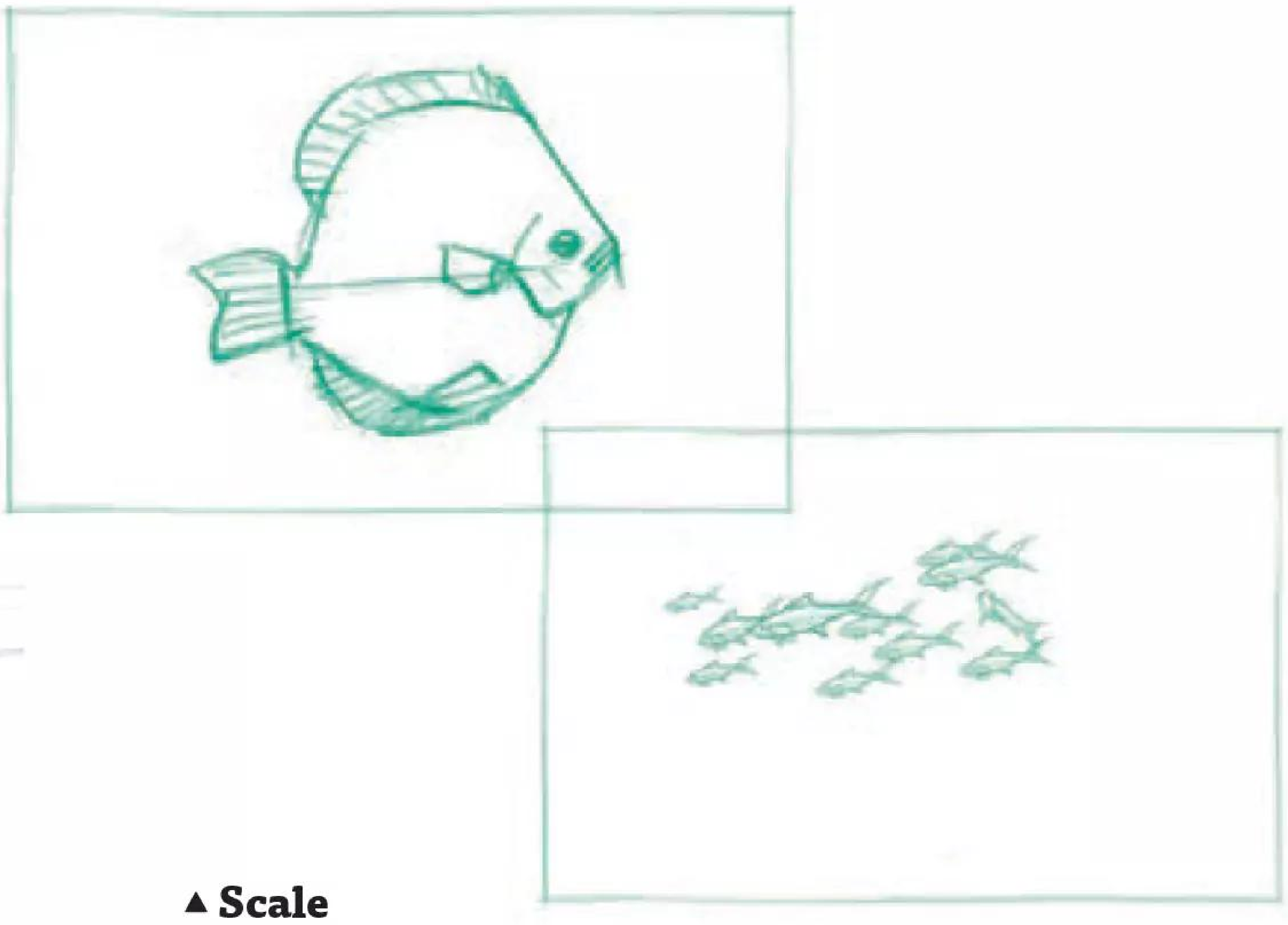


The smaller palm fern above provides a sense of scale for the larger one

▲ The rule of thirds
Break a composition into thirds, vertically and horizontally, and then place the key elements of your image along these lines or at their junctions, and the arrangement achieved will be interesting, pleasing and dynamic.



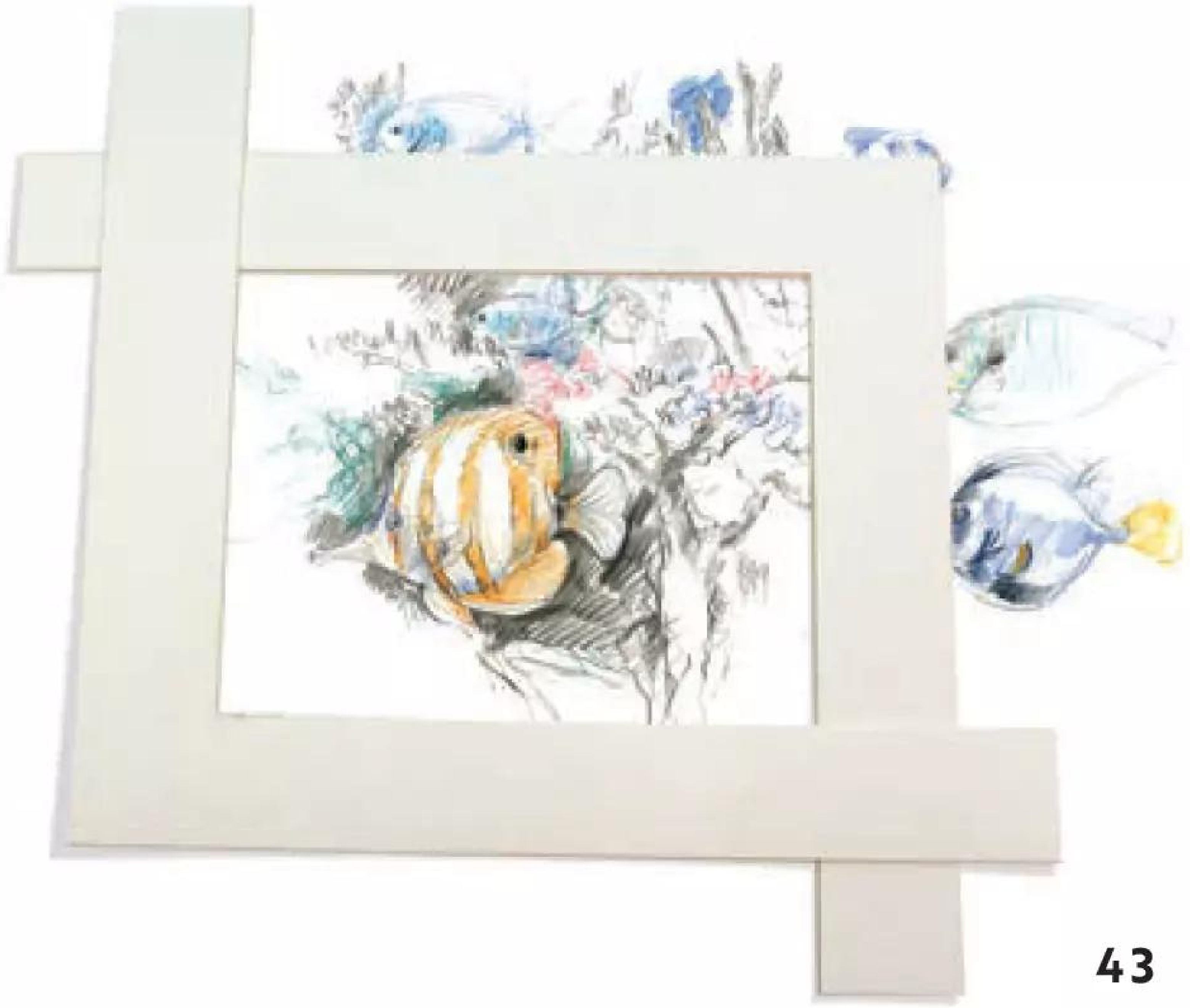


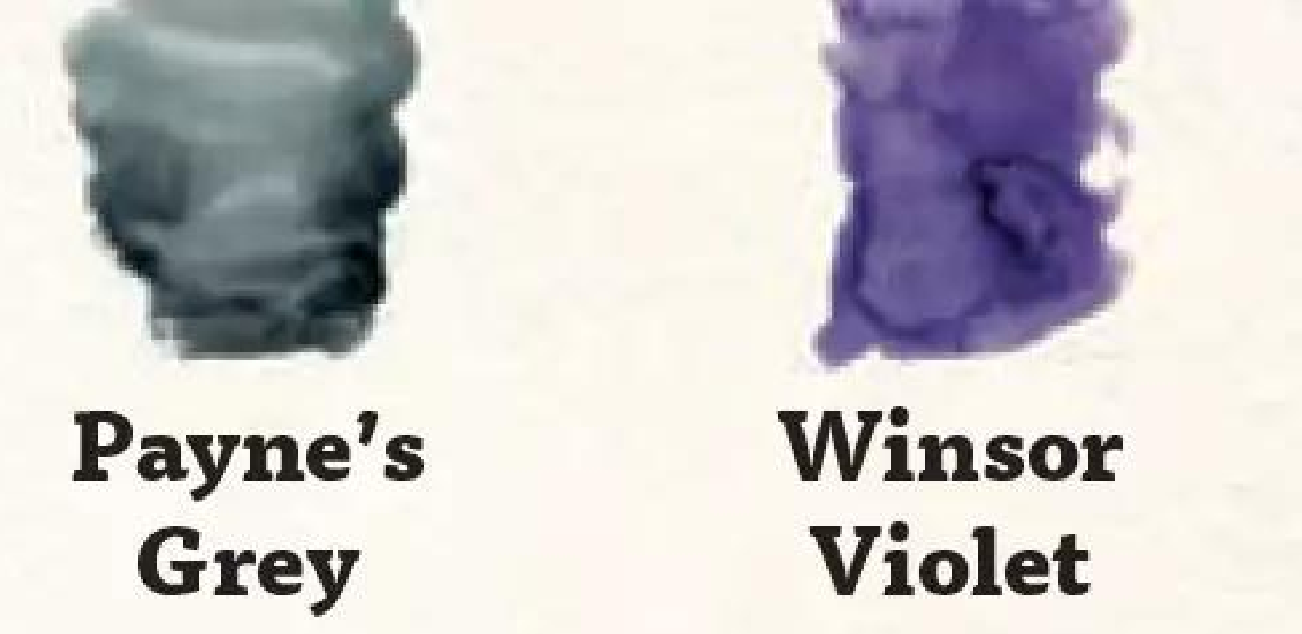


▲ Scale
In anything you draw or design, always have a sense of scale at the back of your mind. A giant fish will make a fish tank look small and might be suitable for a portrait, whereas small fish will make a fish tank look massive and might be suitable for a scene composition.

▲ Calm or agitated?
Horizontal lines can make up a serene arrangement, while dynamic angles can create a more energizing, agitated style.

Cropping close ▸
One exciting idea for creating compelling compositions is to zoom in on a fragment. Even the most familiar view can become a dynamic composition by zooming in close. After a field sketching trip, sometimes I spread all of my studies across a large table, then select one or two that have got potential for a composition. Interesting areas can be isolated by using two L-shaped pieces cut from mount board. ☐





Rule of thirds

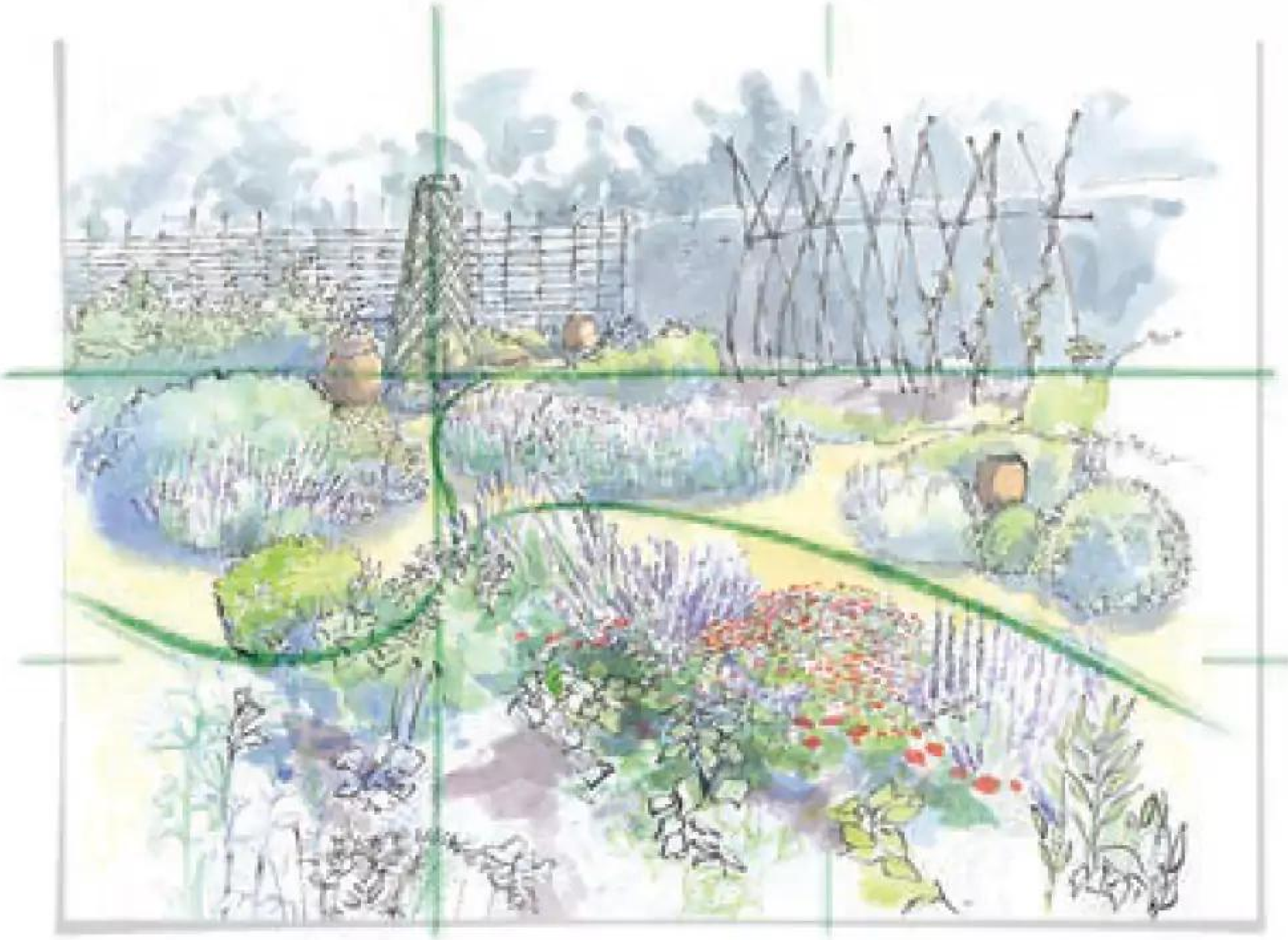
Placing key elements in the centre is not always the best option and can create a lack of visual interest. A common way to organize pictorial elements is to geometrically divide the picture plane into thirds horizontally and vertically to create a satisfying grid.

Asymmetrical designs appear more contemporary and often convey feelings of movement more than drawings with symmetrical designs. However, they are also slightly more challenging when it comes to unifying the elements in the design to give a feeling of coherence. Nevertheless, they create the perfect framework for variety.

MATERIALS

- Light blue artist's quality colouring pencil
- Dip pen and ink
- Watercolour pencils and paints (see swatches above right)
- Large cartridge (drawing) paper or sketchbook
- Sharpener
- Putty eraser

Kew kitchen garden
The historic kitchen garden at Kew Gardens in London is a haven for wildlife and a visual and edible feast. On entering, there is an instant feeling of calm, wellbeing and sustainability as bees buzz about pollinating the fruit and vegetable plants. I was struck by the appealing composition: an oak trellis where fruit trees are trained to grow, bean poles and earthenware pots that created a jumbled charm.

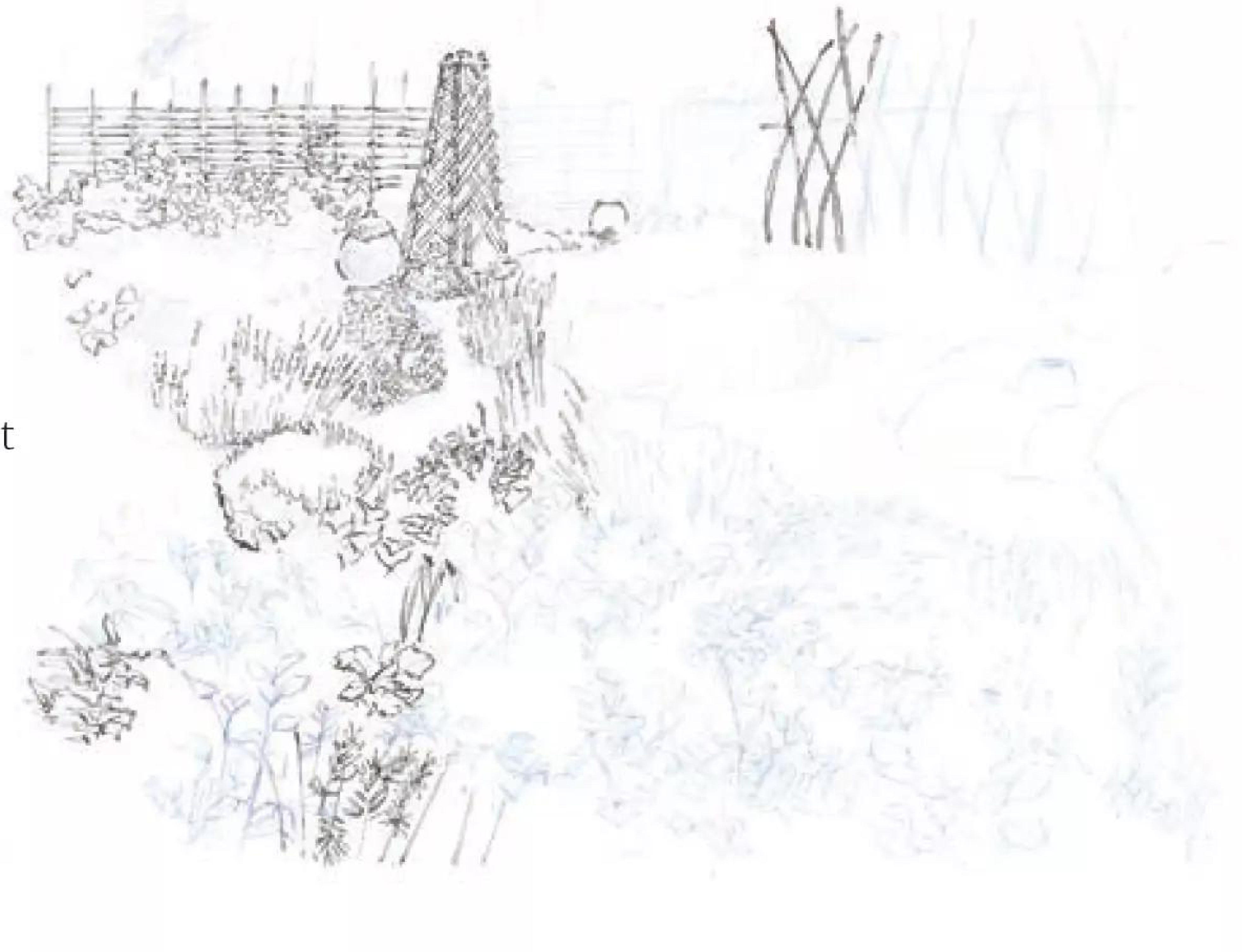


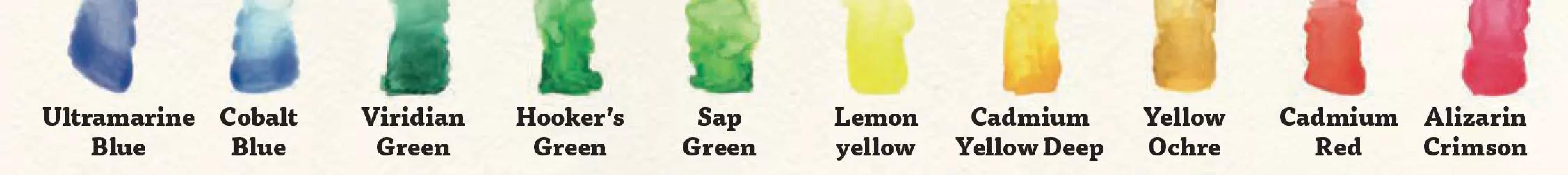
▲ **Curving paths**
The orange paths help to lead the eye through the composition, taking it on a walk through the garden.

Kitchen garden

Before sketching, I spent a moment contemplating what I wanted to use as the focal point. I liked the lattice crisscross of the oak trellis and felt that it was an interesting and entertaining part of the composition. I saw this as the main lead character, the one thing that will draw your attention, like a principal dancer dressed in a stand-out colour in a ballet performance. I purposely placed it a third in from the top of the paper.

1 Sketch out the proportions and main shapes of the composition in a light blue to provide you with some scaffolding for the drawing before you dive in with the permanent dip pen and ink. Leaves and flowers come in a multitude of shapes and sizes, so vary the way you create marks with your dip pen to capture the different plant textures, from broad-leafed to the tiny spiked leaves of lavender.




Ultramarine Blue
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Sap Green
Lemon yellow
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Yellow Ochre
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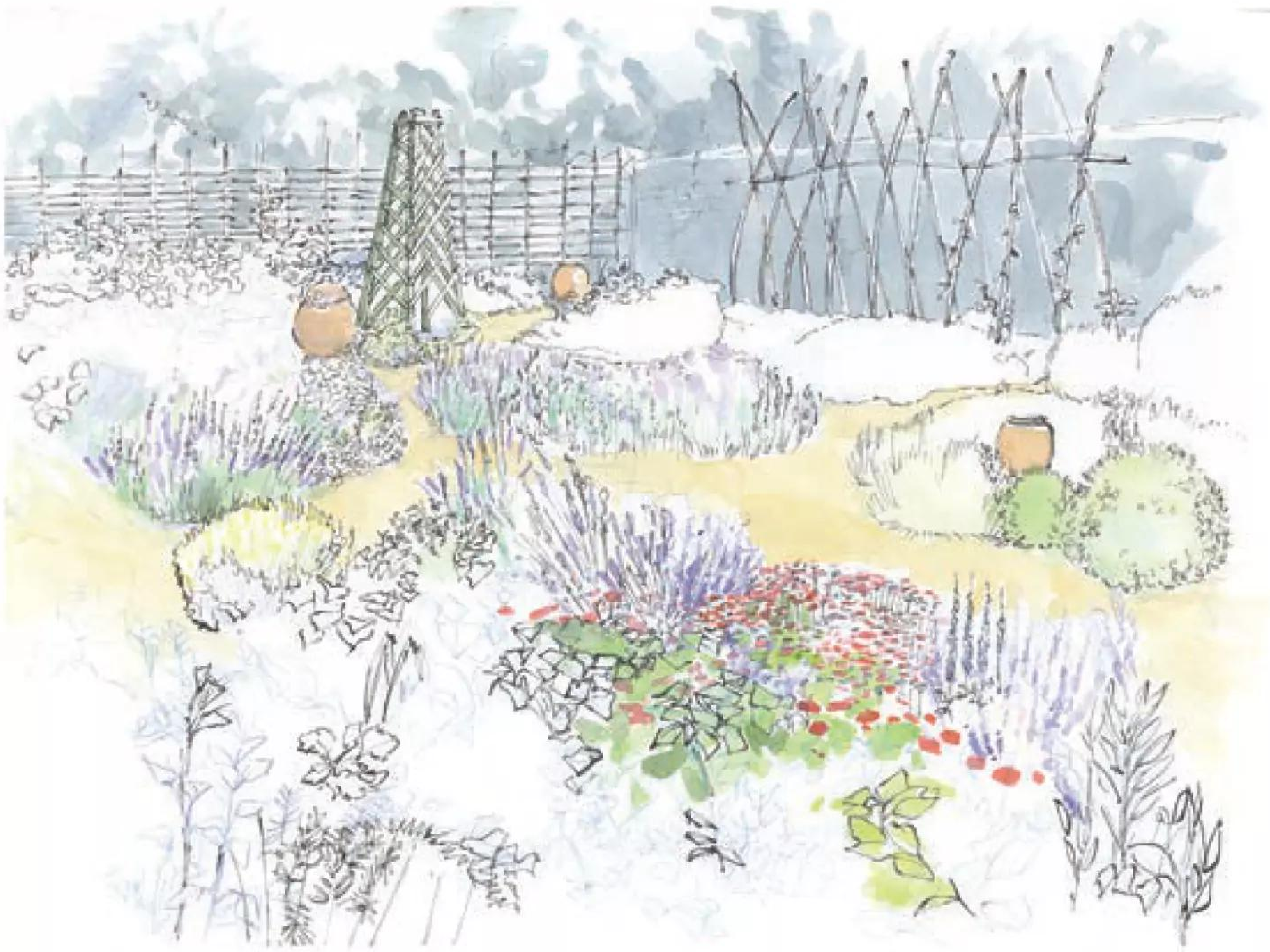
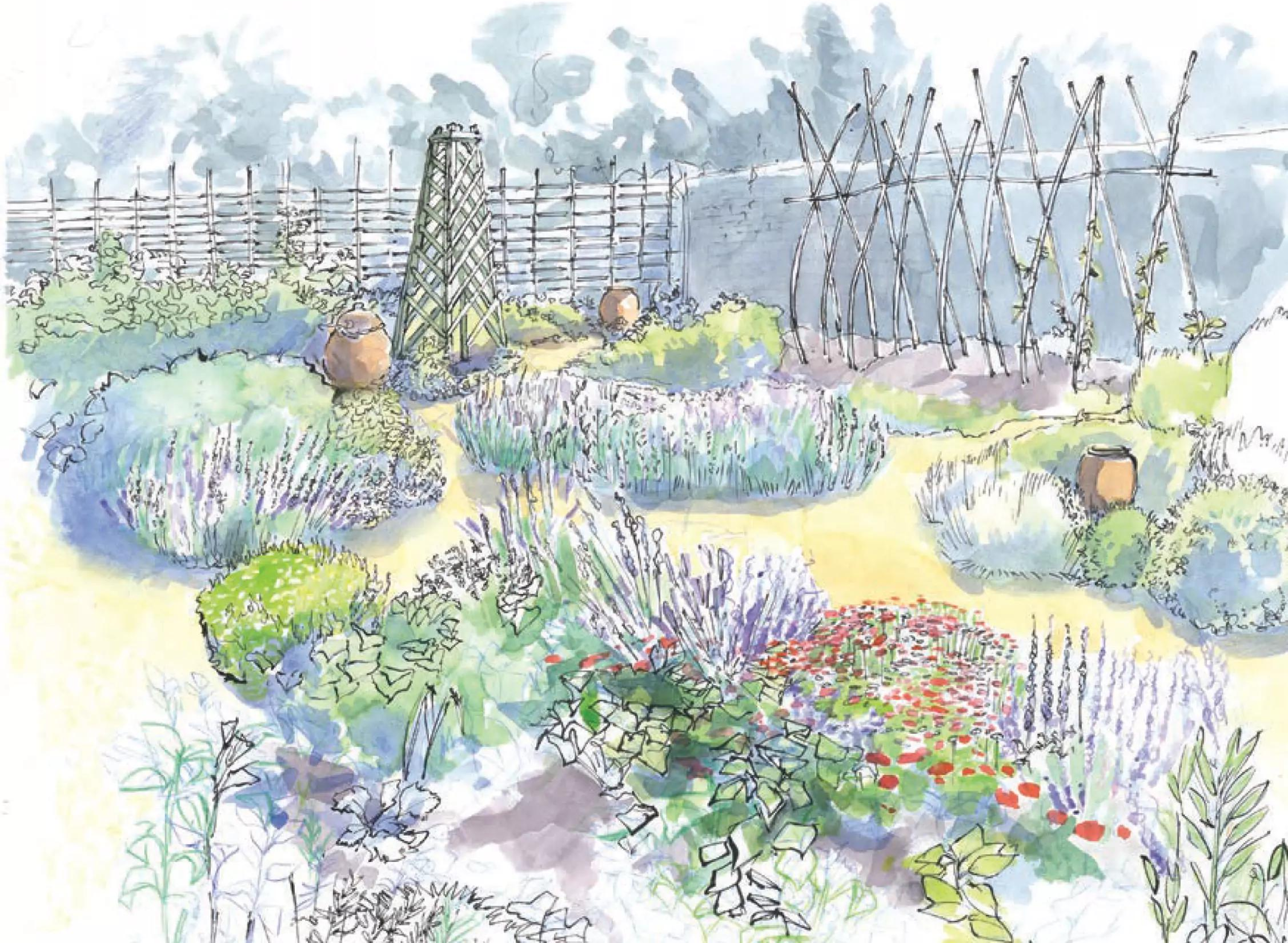
Alizarin Crimson



2 Next, lay down the base shades: the path was a mixture of Yellow Ochre with a touch of Cadmium Red. I switched between colouring pencils and watercolours depending on what pigments were instantly accessible, working from lightest and brightest to darkest and dullest. Watercolour has the benefit of quicker coverage.

3 Create highlights by leaving gaps of plain paper, and steadily build up the mid-tones. As the painting progresses, start adding shade, which will help create a feeling of luminosity. I then added a bath of Ultramarine Blue to all the shadows. ◻



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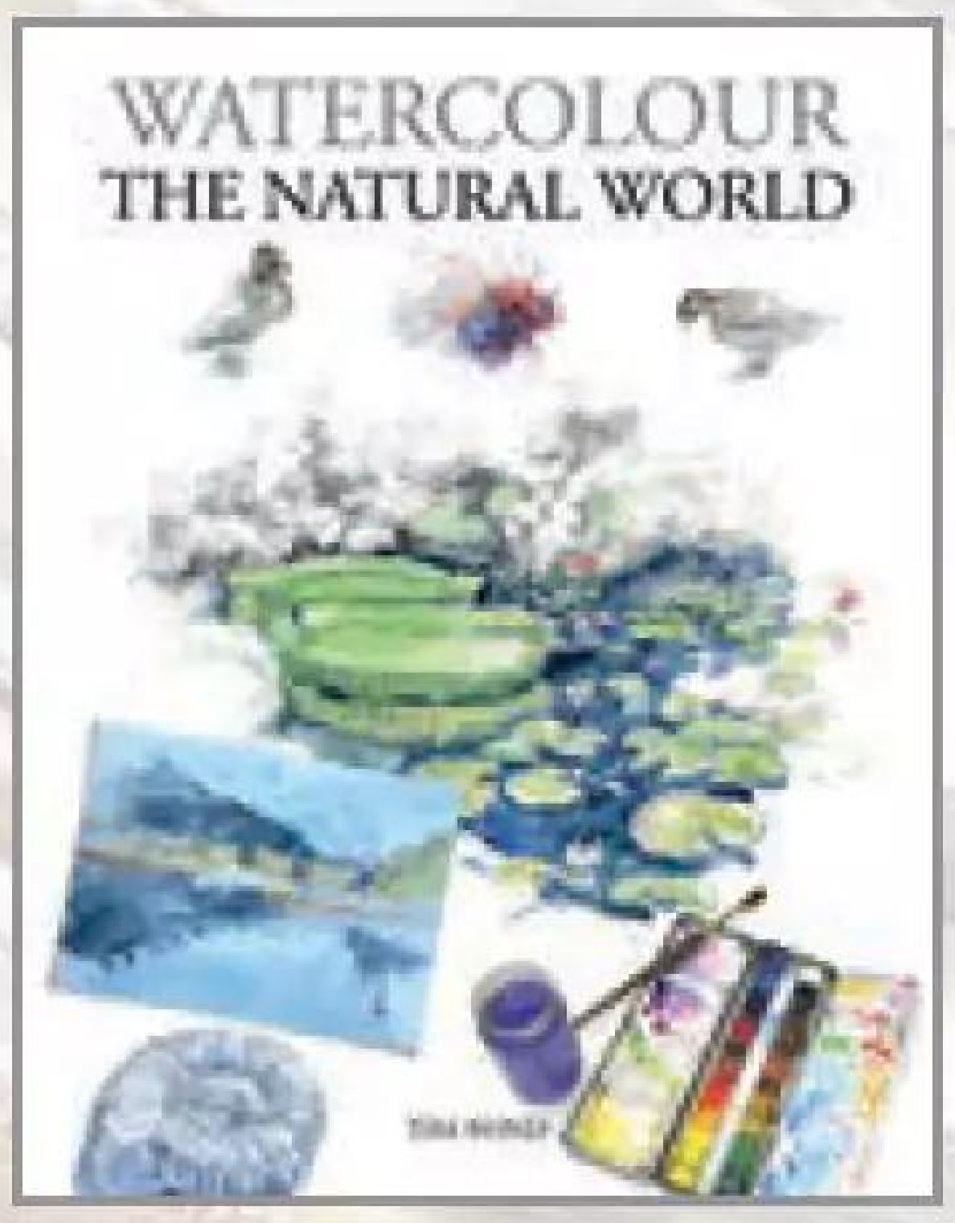
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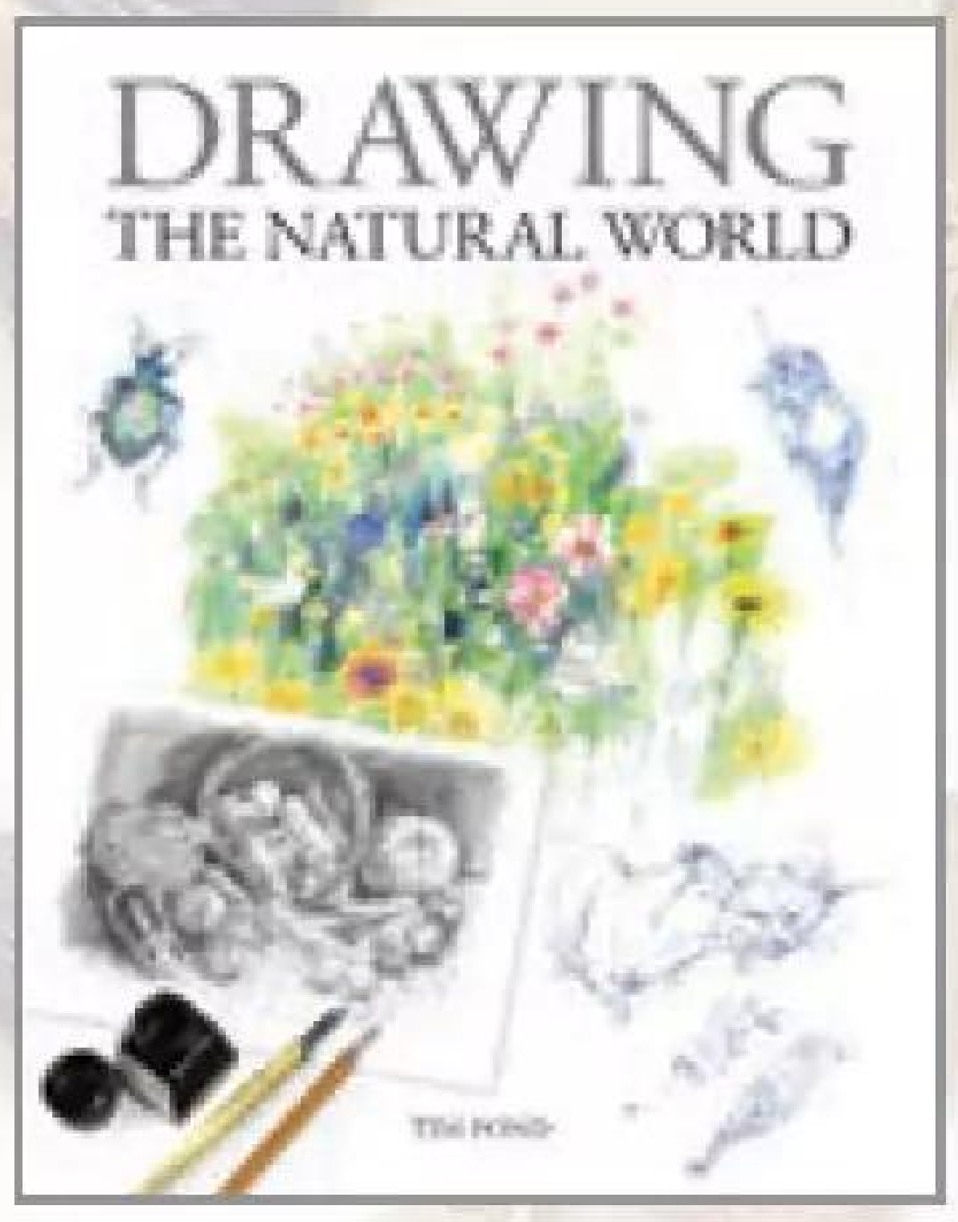
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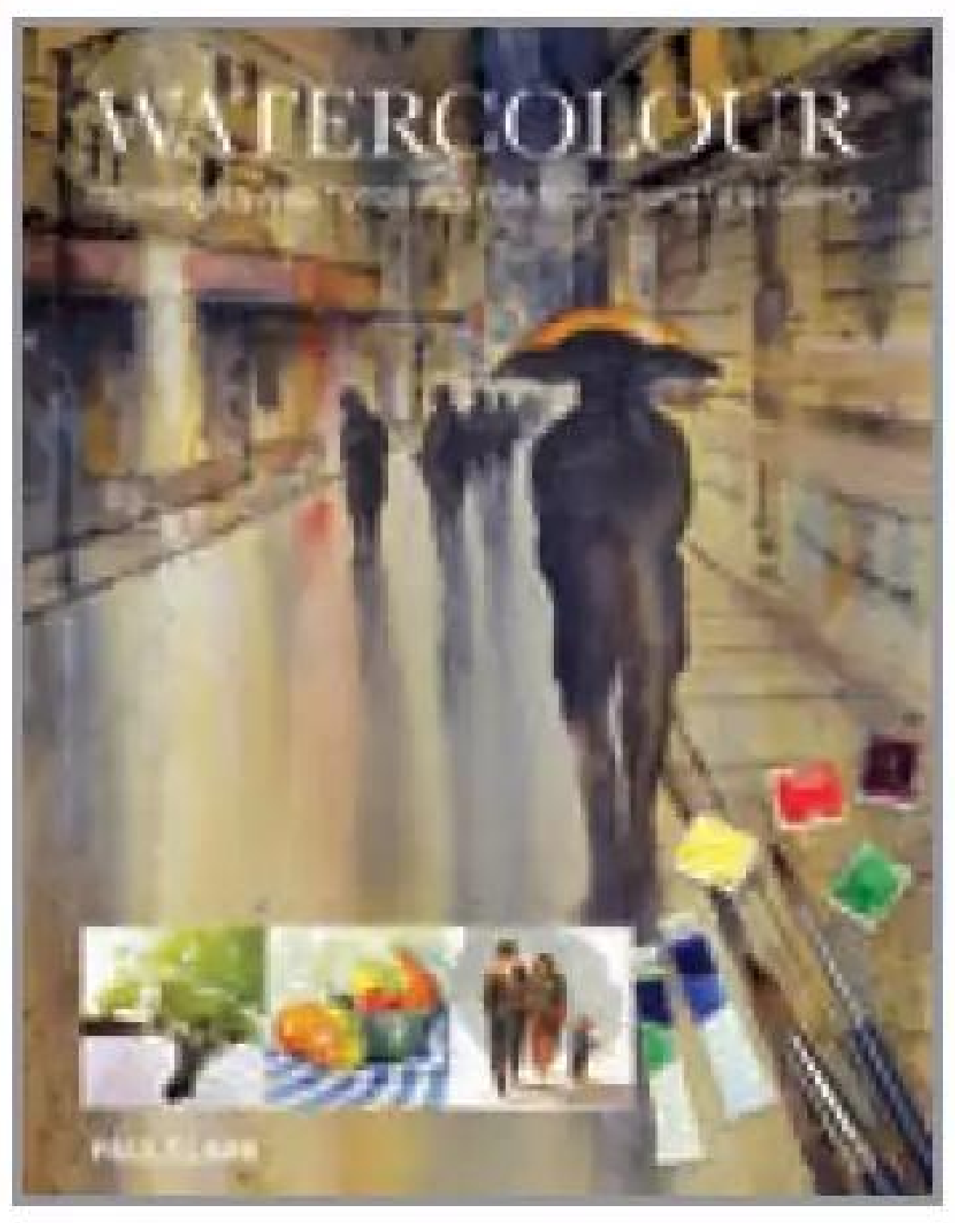
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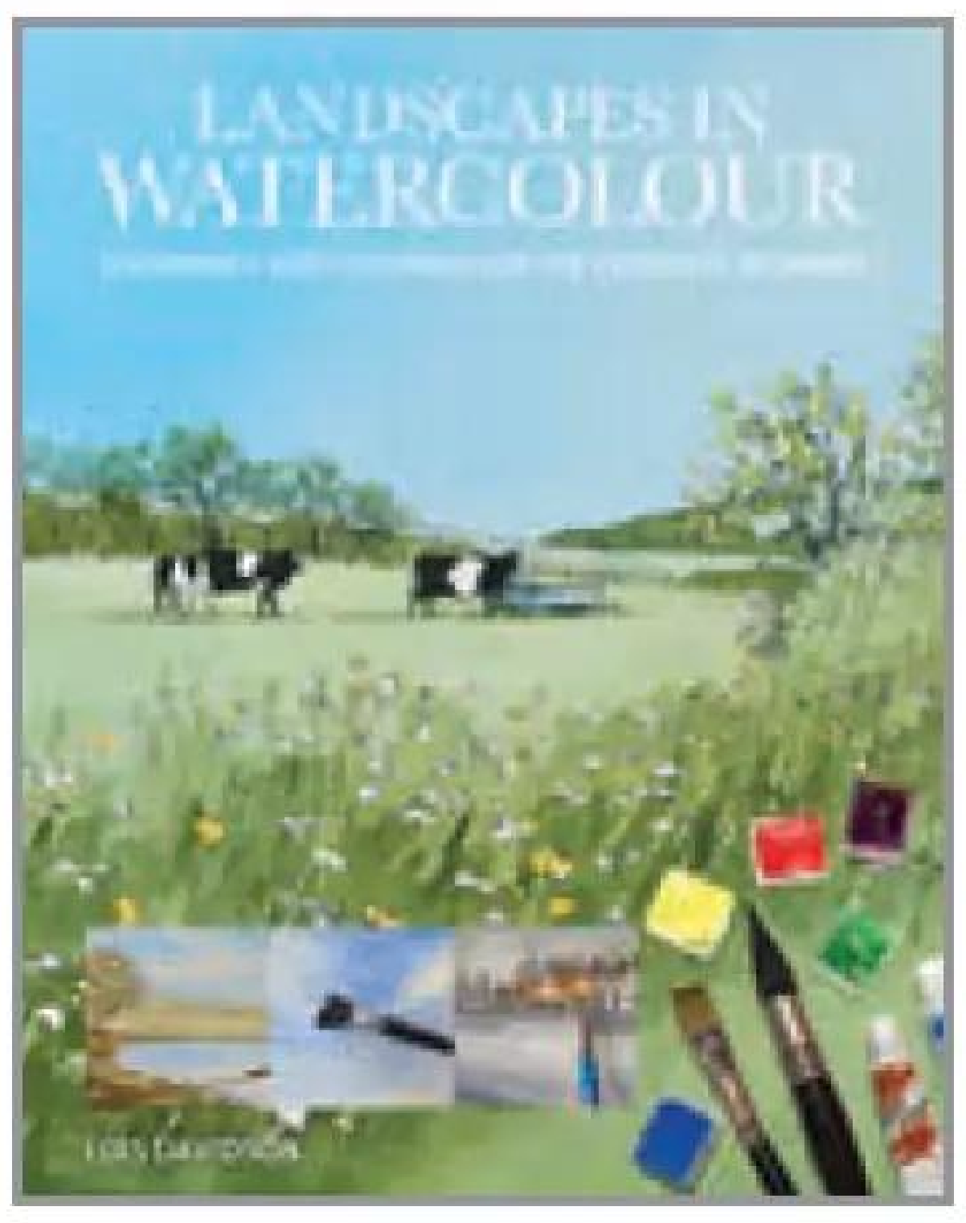
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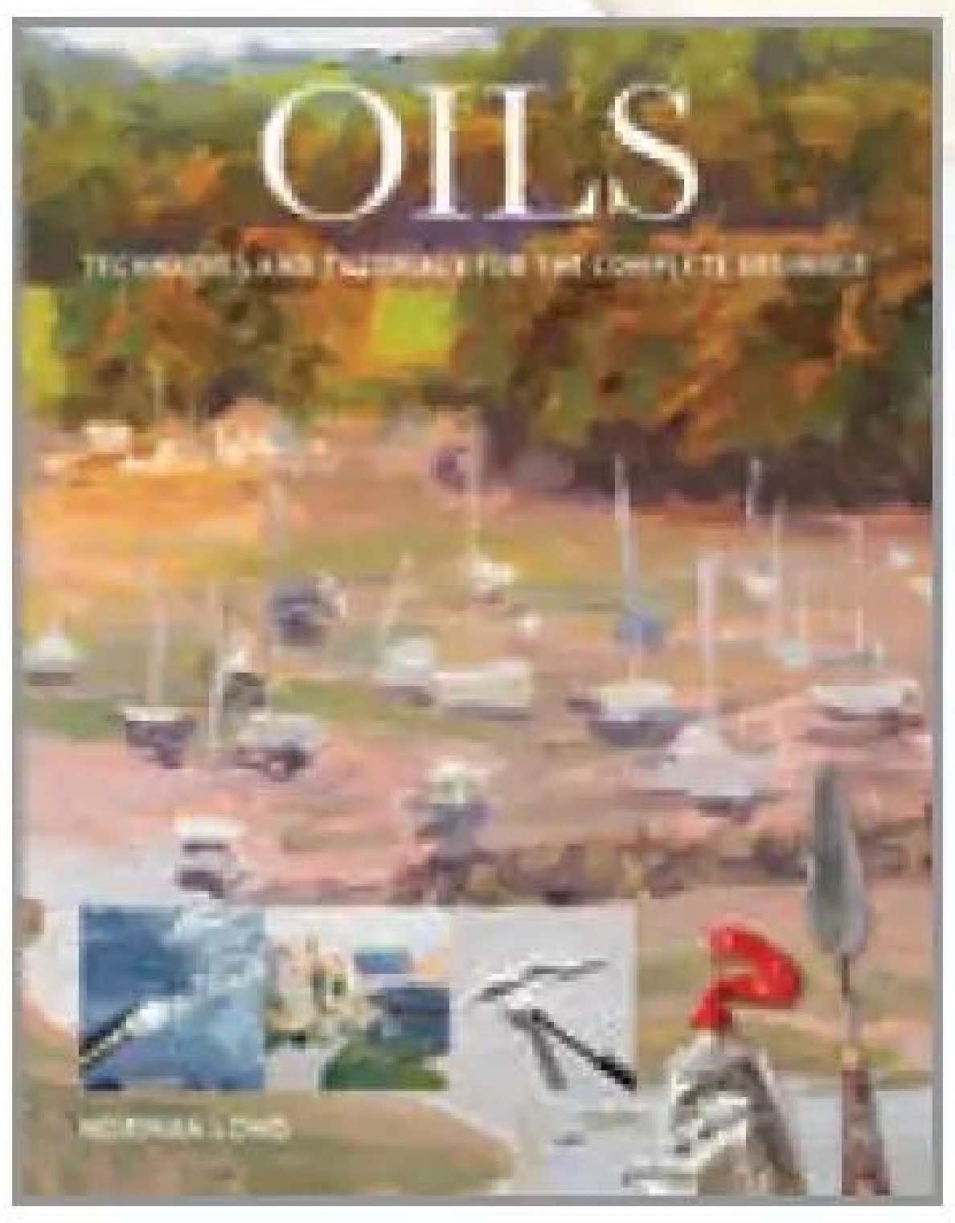

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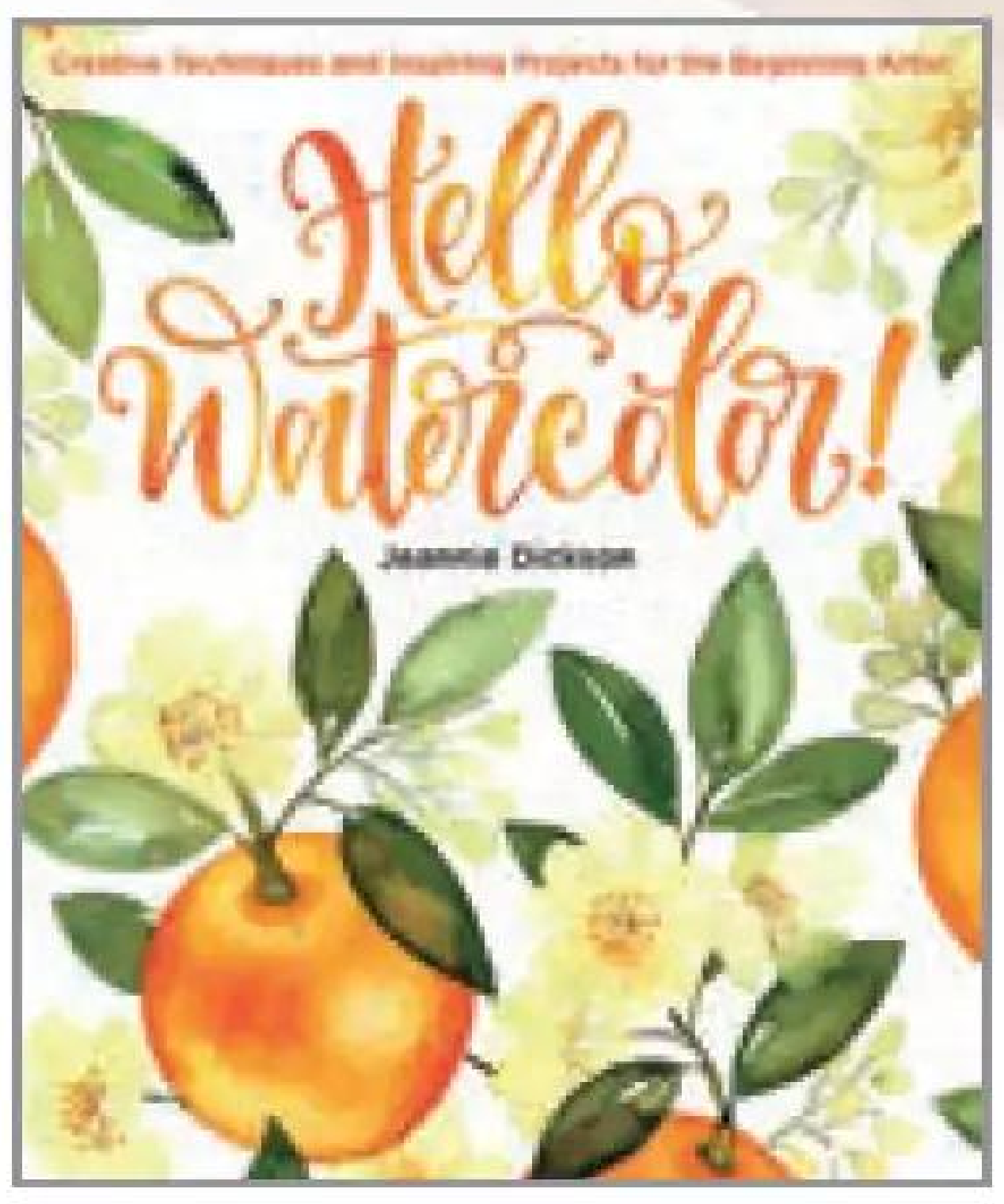
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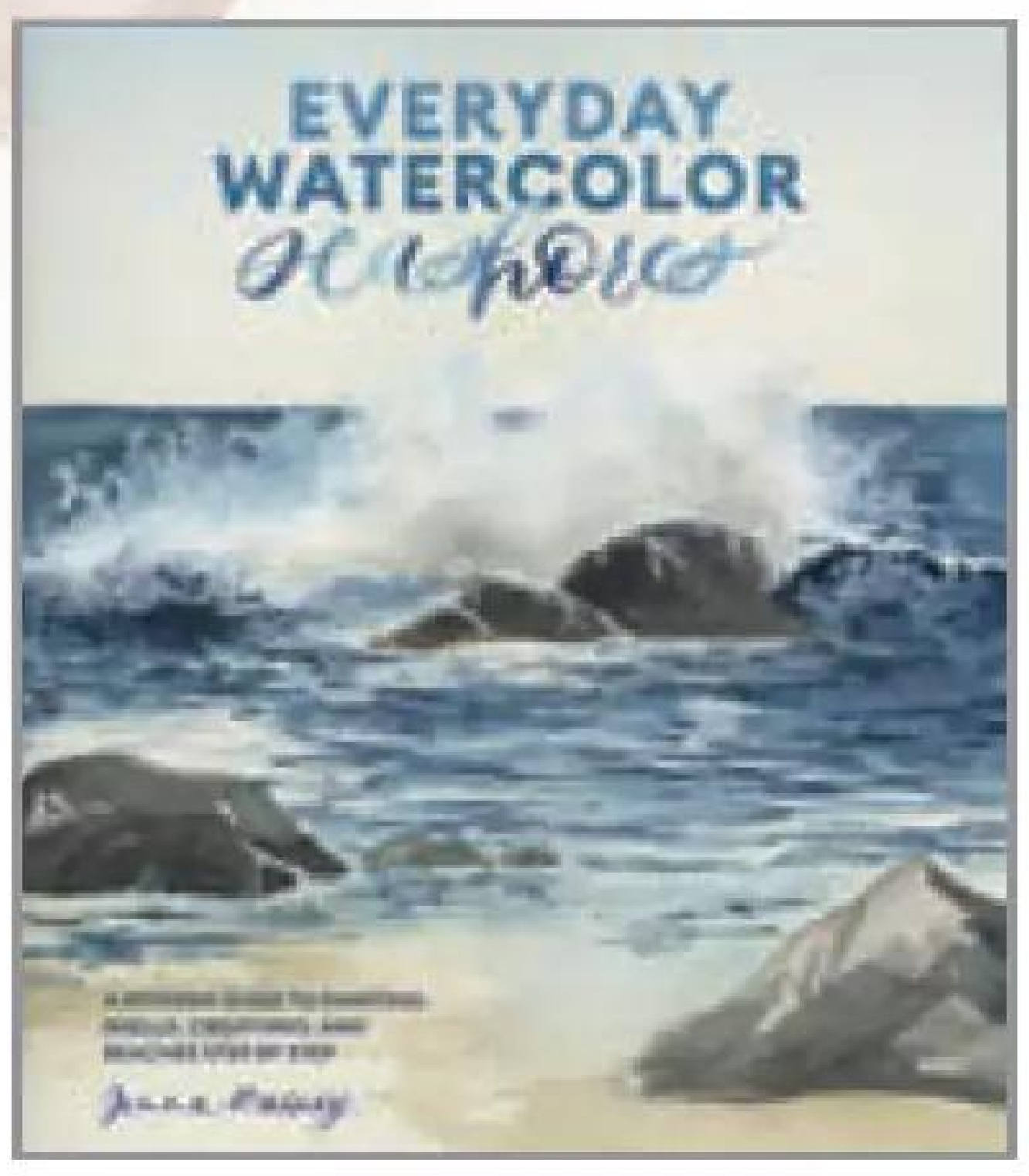
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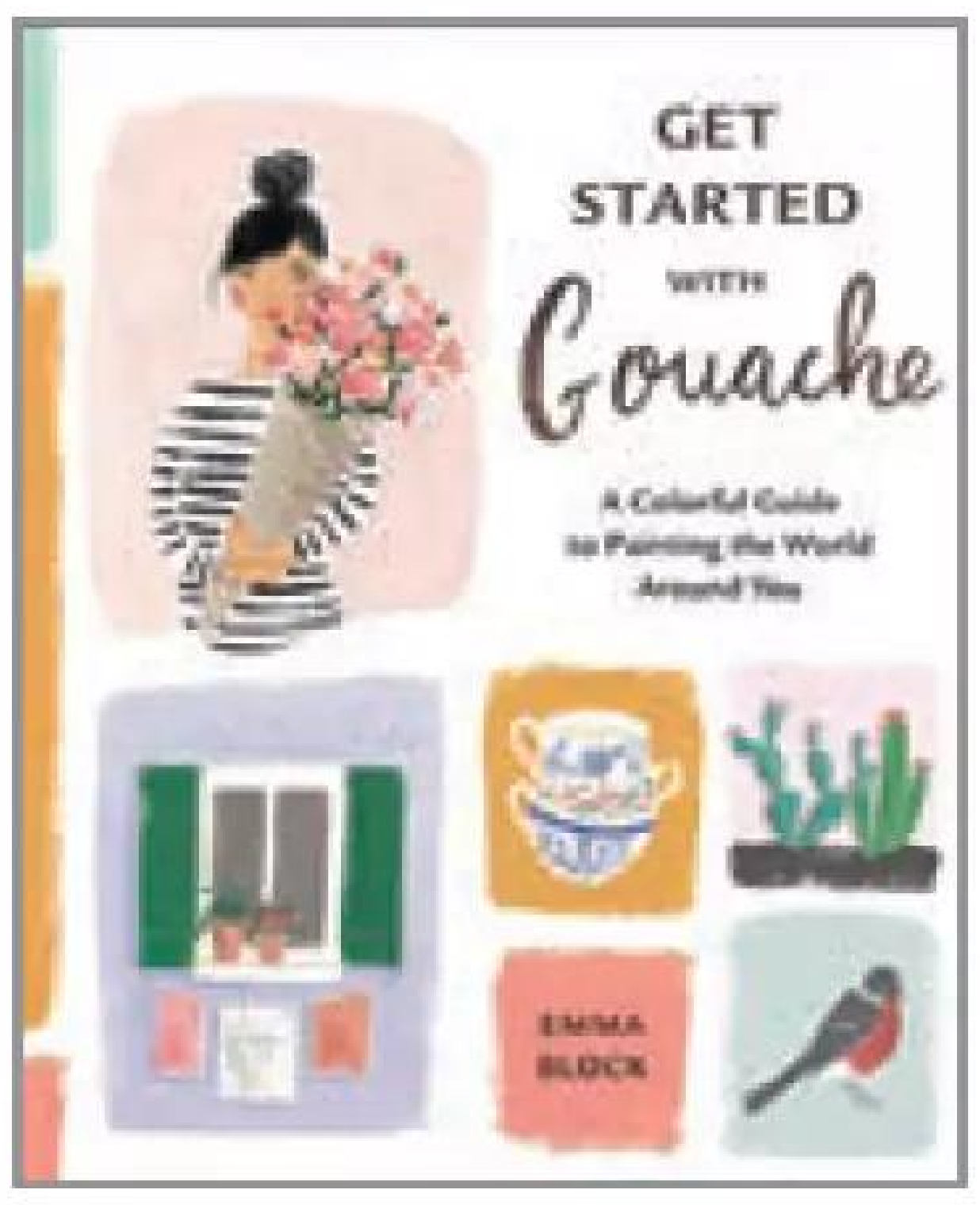
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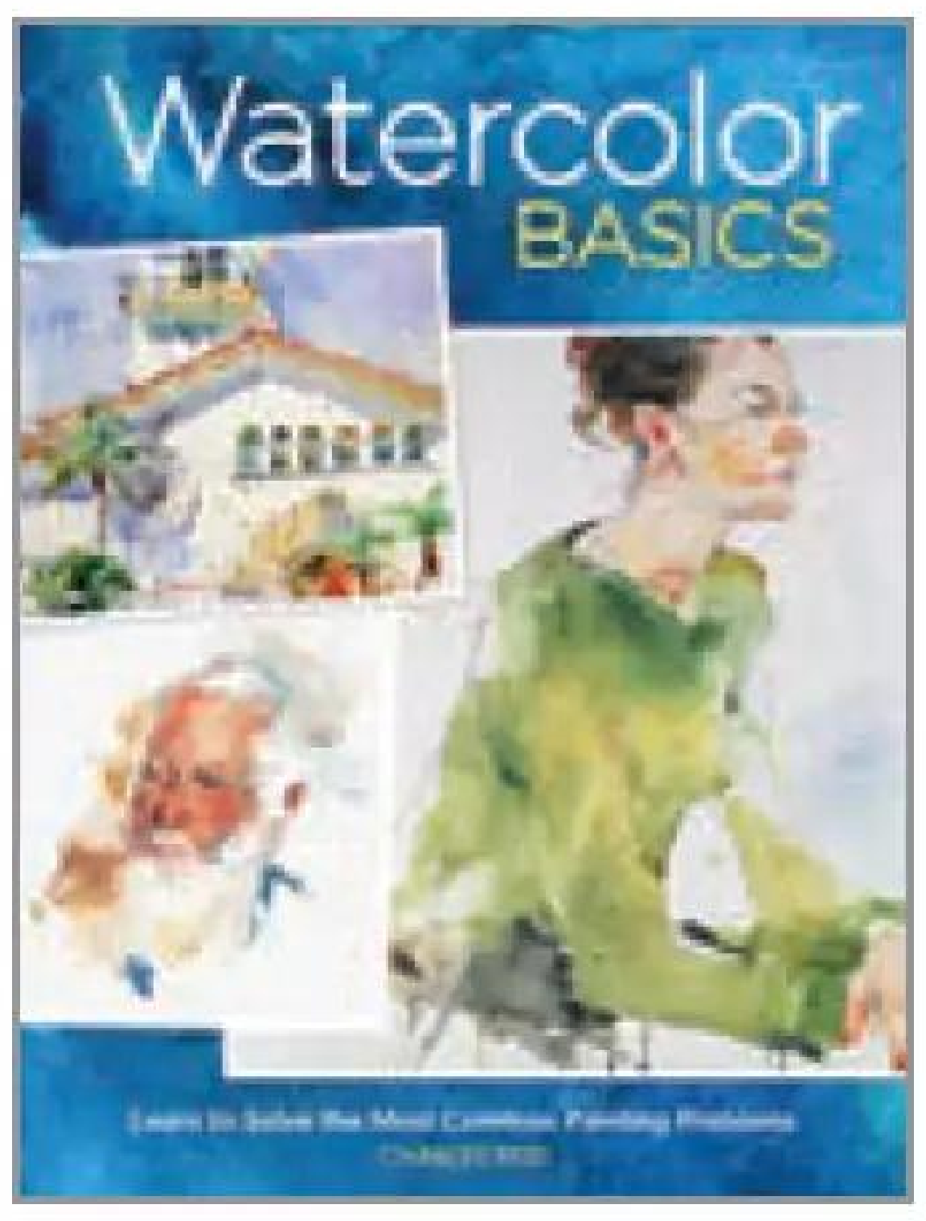
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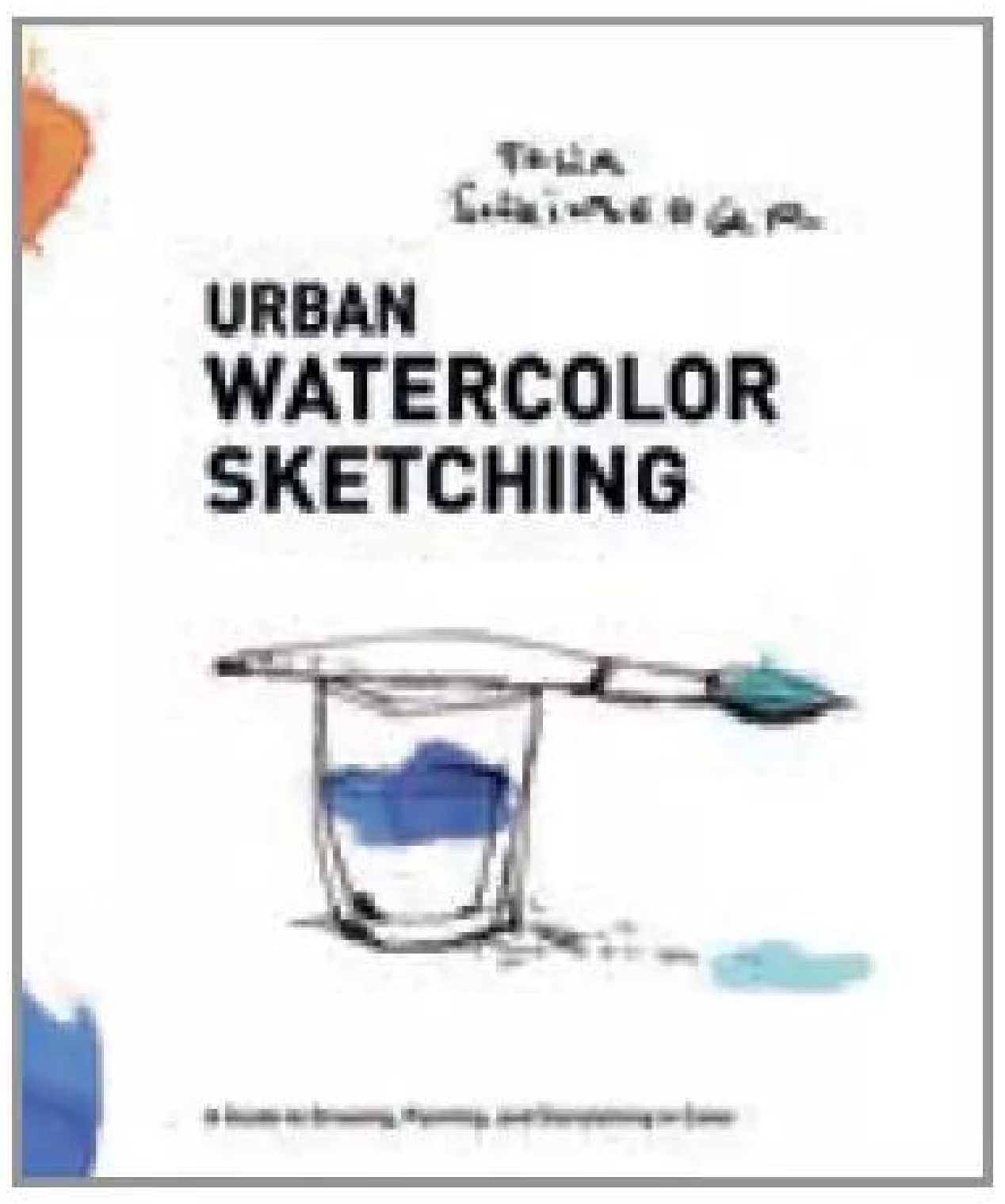
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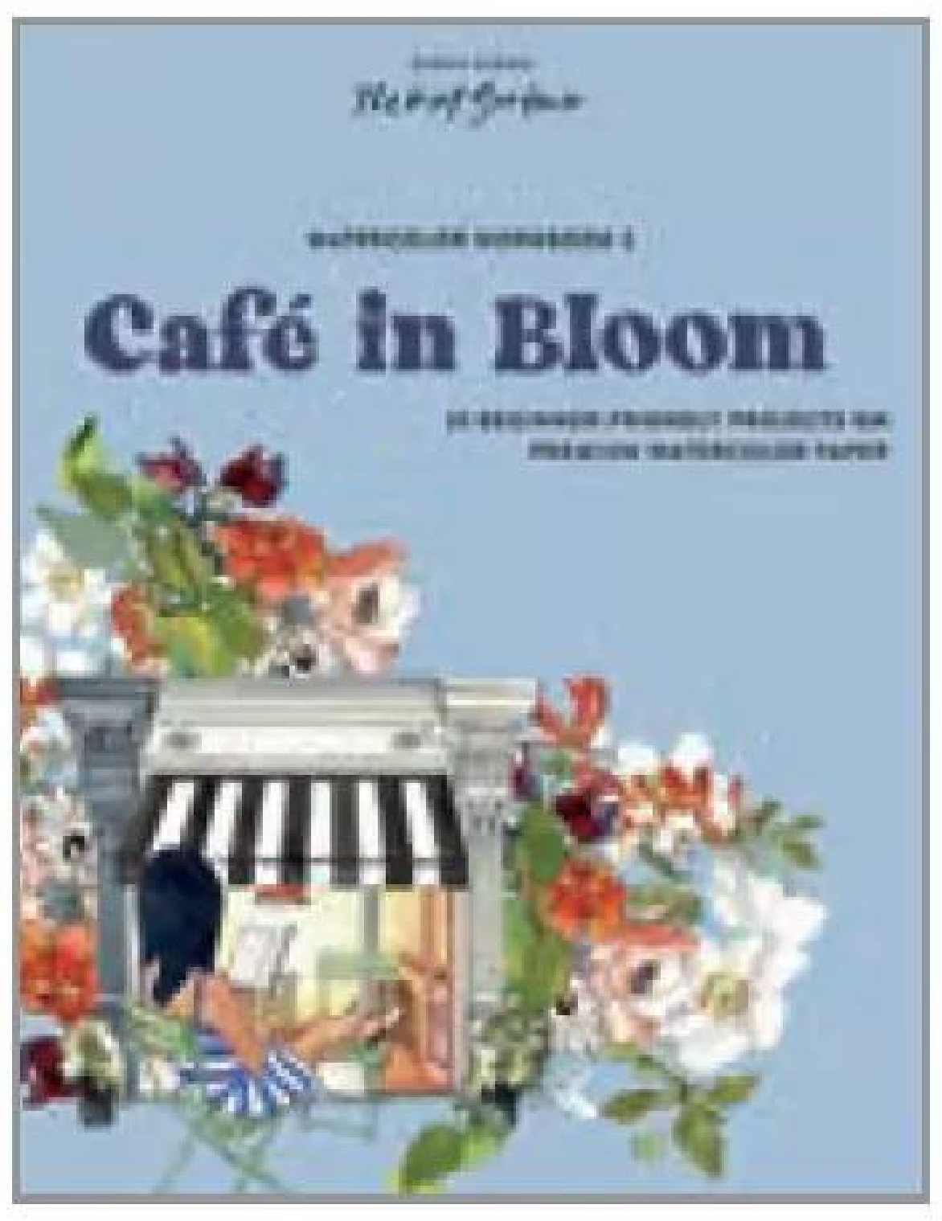
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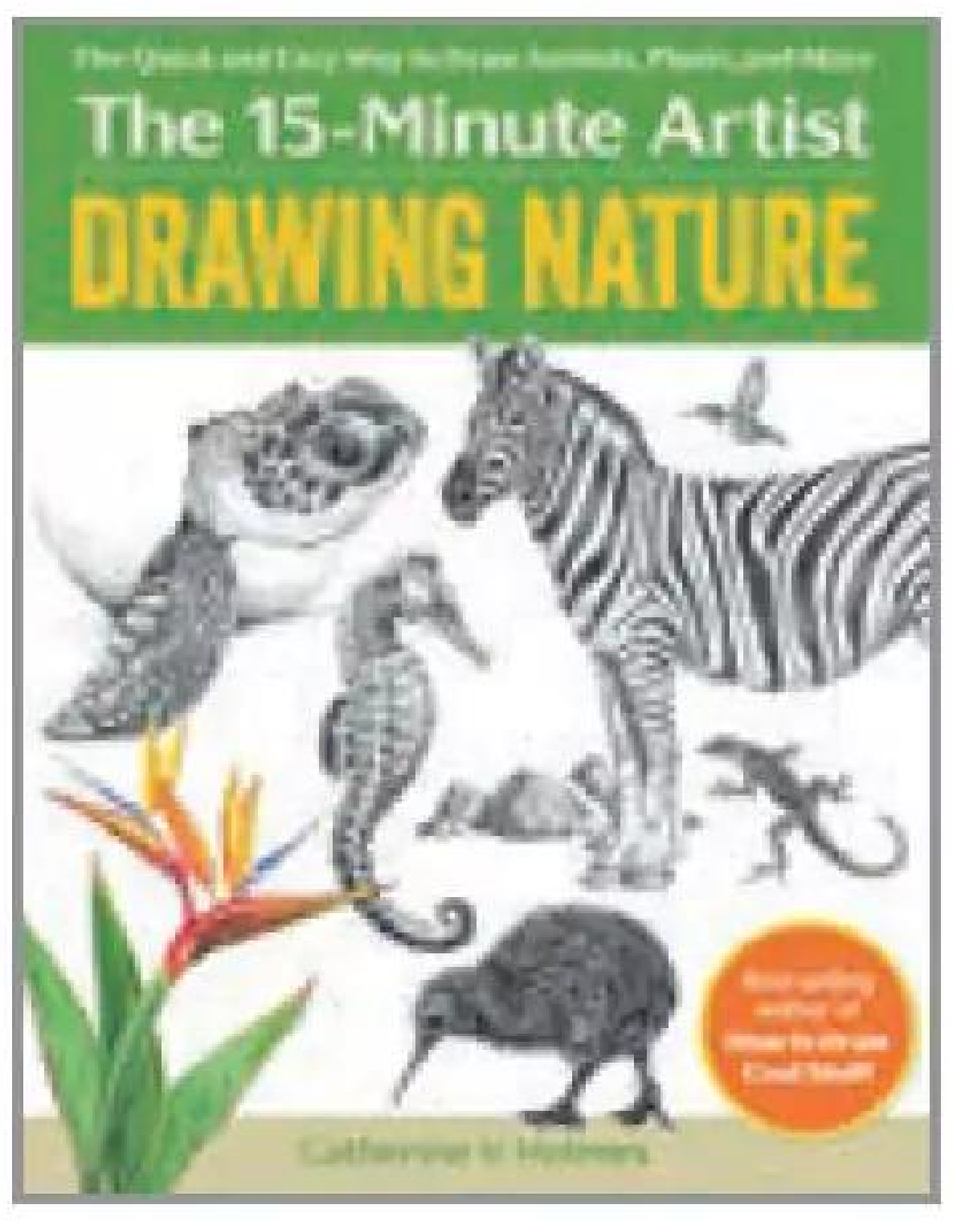
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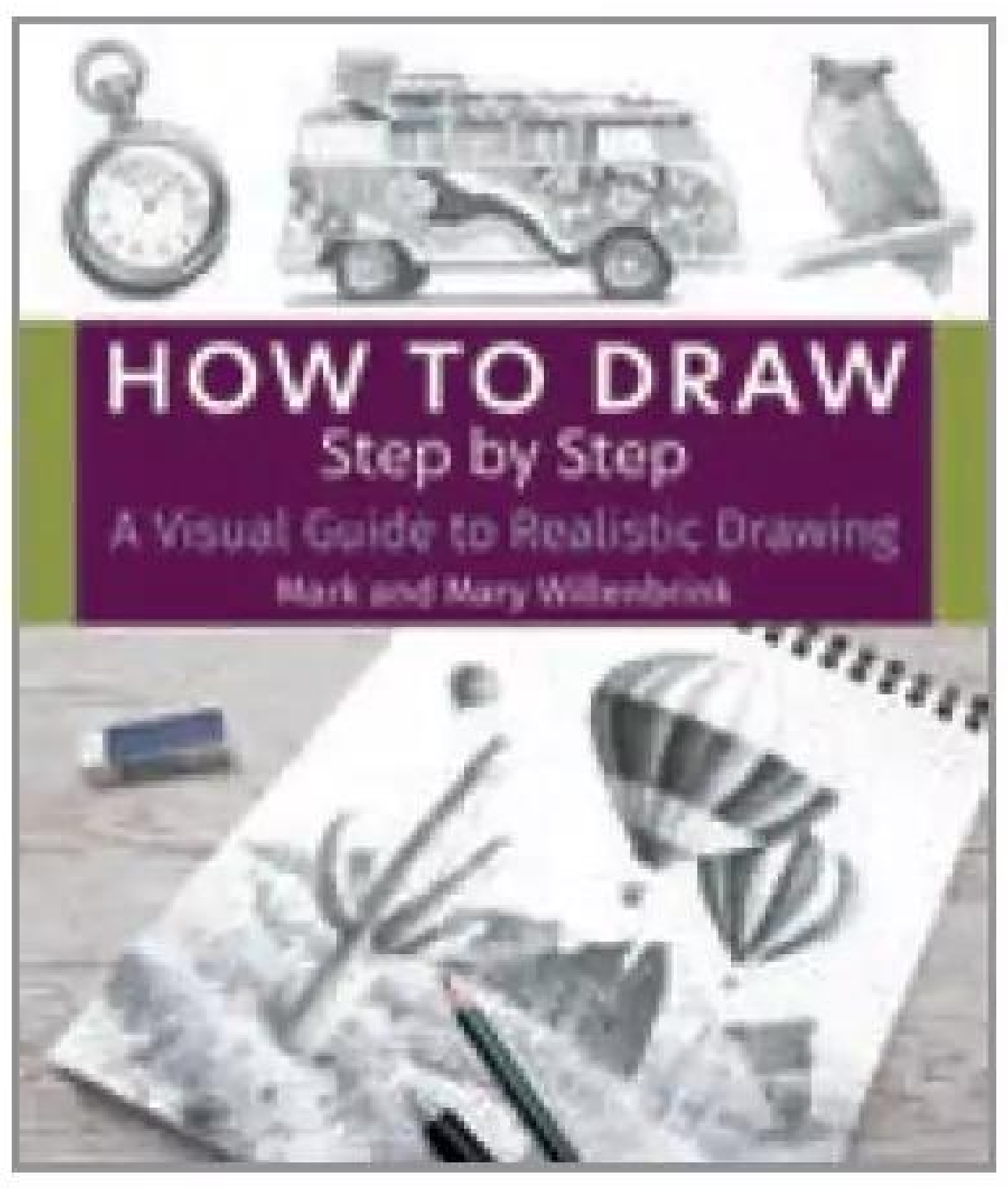
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